United Nations E/CN.3/2011/27

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (g) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: price statistics

Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, which is presented to the Commission for information. The report summarizes recent developments and planned activities of the Working Group. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1

10-66388 (E) 211210

Please recycle

Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

I. Introduction

1. The present report consists of two parts. The first part contains the biennial report to the Statistical Commission on progress in the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics. The second part contains updated terms of reference of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics that are proposed to replace the current terms of reference of 2005. The proposal reflects developments since 2005 and updates the tasks of the Working Group.

II. Progress report on the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

A. Background and purpose of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

2. The mission of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics is to develop international standards and recommendations on price statistics, document best practice guidelines and support their implementation.

3. The Working Group was established in 1998. The original terms of reference focused on the development of the *Consumer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice* and the *Producer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice*, which were published in 2004. The terms of reference were revised in 2005. The revised terms of reference refer to the further development of the consumer price index (CPI) and producer price index (PPI) manuals and their implementation, including a review of the electronic versions of the manuals, and to the development of international manuals for other price statistics, in particular export and import price indices and house price indices. The revised terms of reference also refer to the coordination of international work on price indices.

B. Organization of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

4. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics consists of representatives from the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat) and the World Bank. The Working Group is open and invites experts from statistical offices and academia to participate in its work. The chair of the group circulates among its member organizations.

5. The Working Group aims to meet in conjunction with other international meetings on price statistics. In between, issues are reviewed by means of electronic discussions. The Working Group held its previous meeting on 11 May 2010 in Geneva, in conjunction with the joint ECE/ILO meeting on CPIs, followed by a teleconference on 8 June 2010.

C. Activities since the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission in February 2009

6. The previous biennial report on the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, including the terms of reference, was submitted to the Statistical Commission for its fortieth session in 2009 (E/CN.3/2009/20). Since then, the following activities can be reported.

7. The *Practical Guide to Producing Consumer Price Indices*, a handbook supplementing the *CPI Manual*, was published by ECE in October 2009. It has been widely distributed to national statistical offices and other organizations. This publication provides practical guidance on all aspects of compiling a CPI. Although targeted at CPI compilers in developing countries, it will also be of interest to compilers more generally. The *Guide* is accompanied by a CD-ROM containing training materials. The work on the *Guide* has been led by the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom, drawing on experts from both developed and developing countries. The *Guide* is available from www.unece.org/stats/archive/02.07.e.htm. Translations of the *Guide* into French and Spanish have been done by IMF and are ready for printing.

8. The *Export and Import Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice* was published by IMF in December 2009. While the new manual on the export and import price index (XMPI) follows the same structure as the *PPI Manual*, new chapters on unit value indices, transfer prices and terms of trade indices were added and other chapters expanded to make them consistent with the *System of National Accounts, 2008*. The *XMPI Manual* is available from www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.cfm?sk=19587.0.

9. The *CPI Manual* (www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/guides/cpi/index.htm#manual) is available in English, French, Russian, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese. A translation into Arabic has been completed and is ready to go to press.

10. The *PPI Manual* (www.imf.org/external/np/sta/tegppi/index.htm) is available in English only. IMF is undertaking its translation into Spanish and French.

11. In 2008 Eurostat agreed to organize and finance the preparation of the *Handbook on Residential Property Price Indices*. The handbook will provide best practices for compiling house price indices and aims to improve international comparability of Residential Property Price Indices. It will facilitate setting up house price indices where these are lacking and improving existing indices where necessary. The outline of the handbook and arrangements for consultations and quality assurance have been agreed with the Working Group. Eurostat commissioned a team of internationally recognized price statistics experts, led by Statistics Netherlands, to draft the handbook. To initiate work, a conference on residential property price indices was hosted by the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland, on 11 and 12 November 2009. The first draft of the handbook was discussed at the joint ECE/ILO meeting on CPIs in May 2010. Statistics Netherlands will organize a workshop in February 2011 where a revised draft of the handbook will be presented and discussed. The handbook is expected to be finalized in 2011. The draft handbook is available for consultation and comments on Eurostat's webpage: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/hicp/methodology.

12. An updated version of the Price Index Processor Software has been made available online from www.unece.org/stats/archive/02.07.e.htm. Users can download the software and modify it to meet individual needs. The software was developed by IMF to provide a facility for compiling price indices incorporating recommendations from the latest international price statistics manuals.[1] There are two versions, each with its own user manual, one for compiling CPIs and another for compiling PPIs. The website contains the programs, source codes (which allow users to modify the software as needed), updated user manuals and a link to an online discussion forum.

13. The biennial meeting on CPIs organized jointly by ECE and ILO took place from 10 to 12 May 2010 in Geneva. It was attended by 100 experts from statistical offices, international organizations and research institutions. Papers were presented and discussed on a number of topics: house price indices; user relations; systems of price indices; and other methodological issues. Four topics were discussed in specific workshops: scanner data; seasonal products and quality changes; financial services; and the Harmonized Indices of Consumer Prices of the European Union.

14. At its meeting in May 2010 the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics discussed, among other things, a proposal to update its terms of reference, which date back to 2005. Updating the terms of reference would reflect developments since 2005 and stress the role of the Working Group in coordinating international work on price statistics. The new terms of reference would also include annexes containing procedures for the production and publication of manuals and handbooks and a list of the publications prepared under the auspices of the Working Group.

D. Additional information

15. The terms of reference of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, previous reports and list of members are available from www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/guides/cpi/index.htm.

III. Proposed updated terms of reference for the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

Mission

16. The mission of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics is to develop international standards and recommendations on price statistics, document best practice guidelines and support their implementation. Price statistics include consumer price indices, producer price indices, export-import price indices, real estate price indices and other price statistics as are required, preferably compatible with the System of National Accounts, 2008 and updates thereto. The Working Group reports to the United Nations Statistical Commission.

[1] IMF and ECE neither provide technical support nor assume any liability for the use of the software.

Objectives

17. The objectives of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics are:

(a) To develop manuals and handbooks with best practice guidelines on concepts and methods of price statistics and support their use. The procedures for the production and publication of manuals and handbooks are contained in annex I. The manuals and handbooks published or planned to be published under the auspices of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics are listed in annex II;

(b) To develop guidance on best practices in order to improve the quality and international comparability of price statistics, and to be proactive in addressing new and upcoming issues and express its views on the importance and priority of problems and issues in the field of price statistics;

(c) To coordinate the work of international organizations in implementing best practices contained in manuals or handbooks on price indices, in sharing information on training and technical assistance and in using resources efficiently to avoid duplication of efforts;

(d) To coordinate discussions of price index methodology at the international level, in particular in the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes and the meetings on consumer price indices organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Labour Organization, and to ensure the necessary linkages with other relevant work, such as the International Comparison Programme and the Voorburg Group on Services Statistics;

(e) To support the development of a framework for price statistics to explain the links between various price indices and between price indices and other relevant economic and labour statistics. One particularly important framework is the System of National Accounts, which provides an integrated and coherent system of economic statistics.

Members of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics and organization of work

18. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics comprises the following international organizations:

(a) Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE);

(b) International Labour Organisation (ILO);

(c) International Monetary Fund (IMF);

(d) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD);

(e) Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat);

(f) World Bank.

19. The Working Group is open to participation from interested and committed organizations, chairs of advisory groups on price index manuals and experts from national statistical offices, academia and international organizations. The Working Group may invite these interested parties to participate in its meetings and in its work programme.

20. The chair and secretariat of the Working Group rotate among the member organizations.[2]

21. Meetings of the Working Group will, as far as possible, take place at the same time as related scheduled events such as the ECE/ILO meetings on consumer price indices or the Ottawa Group meetings. The Working Group will conduct virtual meetings, using e-mail correspondence or teleconferencing as needed.

22. Organizations participating in the Working Group are expected to meet their own direct expenses. In addition, organizations are expected to contribute where possible to financing other related costs of the Working Group, including the development of manuals and handbooks and the hiring of experts.

Activities and output

23. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics shall provide guidance by, for example, developing new and maintaining existing manuals or handbooks on price statistics. Manuals should contain comprehensive information and explanations for index compilation, including theoretical, conceptual and practical issues that statistical offices should take into account. Handbooks aim to provide more specific and practical guidance on index compilation in line with existing relevant manuals and emerging knowledge. The manuals and handbooks shall:

(a) Address both conceptual and operational issues such as sampling and data collection methods, aggregation formulas, treatment of quality changes and missing prices (temporarily, permanently and seasonal), and computation and dissemination of data and metadata;

(b) Be intended for use by both developed and developing countries;

(c) Be suitable for training and advisory missions.

24. In its guidance the Working Group shall take into account:

(a) The particular conditions in developing and transition economies and the movements towards free-market economies in many countries;

(b) The circumstances in financial markets in developed and developing economies;

(c) Technological changes affecting the cost and quality of goods and services, their relative prices, and changes in supply and demand.

25. The Working Group may establish advisory groups or technical expert groups to provide guidance on the production and updating of manuals and handbooks.

26. The Working Group shall facilitate the sharing of information among member organizations on training plans and materials, technical assistance to countries on price indices and other activities which the organizations undertake to implement best practices.

---

[2] ILO chaired the Working Group from 1998 when it was established. IMF chaired from April 2004 to February 2007. ECE chaired from March 2007 to February 2011. Eurostat will chair the group from March 2011.

27. The activities of the Working Group are expected to receive wider exposure through discussion at relevant regional meetings and regular communication with international experts and groups using electronic media such as the Internet.

28. Proposals for new manuals and handbooks, outlines and draft material will be widely circulated through electronic and other media for comments and suggestions to ensure that all regional concerns are adequately addressed. Relevant organizations and groups such as the United Nations regional commissions, the Ottawa Group, the Voorburg Group and the International Comparison Programme will also be encouraged to discuss them at their meetings.

29. The Working Group shall establish its work programme under the present terms of reference.

Annex I

Procedures for the production and publication of manuals and handbooks

1. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics may agree to facilitate the production and publication of manuals or handbooks on price statistics. For this purpose it is required that a work and time plan be presented and agreed on by the Working Group. The plan shall include a detailed outline of the publication, a list of authors and possible co-authors and/or reviewers by chapter or by topic, and a description of the quality-assurance process and how intended users are consulted in the process. The plan should also explain by whom and how the manual or handbook will be published and clarify copyrights.

2. Before publication, the final draft shall be approved by the Working Group. Once approved by the Working Group, the manual or handbook can be published on paper and/or electronically. The publication should be published with the name of the Working Group member organizations on the front cover, unless otherwise agreed. The publication should also mention in its preface that it is approved by the Working Group and acknowledge support from the Working Group member organizations. The Working Group may decide to update the electronic version of a manual or a handbook. This may include update of issues already covered in the publications or addressing new ones. The work to update a publication or part of it may be undertaken by the editor of the publication or another organization or individual (e.g. the author and/or co-author of a specific chapter), as agreed by the Working Group.

3. Before updates are implemented in the electronic version of a publication, the Working Group shall approve the changes. Proposals for larger and/or substantive changes, including new guidance on methods or practices, should be discussed and agreed upon by the Working Group. Minor, non-substantive changes and corrections of mistakes and errors may be undertaken by the editor — or by the author, referring to the editor — who should inform the Working Group of the changes and corrections.

Annex II

Publications prepared under the auspices of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

Publication	*Responsible organization*	*Status*
Consumer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice	ILO	Published by ILO, 2004
Producer Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice	IMF	Published by IMF, 2004
Export and Import Price Index Manual: Theory and Practice	IMF	Published by IMF, 2009
Practical Guide to Producing Consumer Price Indices	Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom	Published by ECE, 2009
Handbook on Residential Property Price Indices	Eurostat	Being drafted

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/28

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (h) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: environment statistics

Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics

Progress report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A). It summarizes the progress made by the Expert Group in the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics established by the United Nations Statistics Division. The report describes the steps implemented since the forty-first session and summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting held in New York from 8 to 10 November 2010. It also describes the way forward in 2011.

* E/CN.3/2011/1.

10-67853 (E) 291210

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session, the Statistical Commission discussed the report of the Secretary-General on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (E/CN.3/2010/9).

2. The Commission:

(a) Recognized the importance of environment statistics and congratulated the Expert Group on its excellent work and report;

(b) Acknowledged that the 1984 *Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics* has been a useful framework in many countries for the development of environment statistics;

(c) Endorsed the programme of work for the revision of the *Framework* and the development of a core set of environment statistics;

(d) Cautioned that the current efforts related to the revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) should not be diluted;

(e) Emphasized, with regard to the guiding principles for the revision, the need to:

(i) Engage all stakeholders, including the scientific community, in the process;

(ii) Ensure complementarity with the SEEA;

(iii) Use caution when considering the ecosystem approach or other policy frameworks as the conceptual foundation for the revised *Framework*;

(iv) Provide supporting methodological guidance and best practices within a reasonable time following the revision of the *Framework*;

(f) Recommended, with regard to the proposed contents of the revised *Framework*; that higher visibility be given to the need for institutional coordination and cooperation, and work that has been done at the regional level;

(g) Asked the United Nations Statistics Division to develop a more realistic timetable, in consultation with countries and other stakeholders;

(h) Noted the importance of greater involvement by the Interseeretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics in the development of the *Framework*;

(i) Welcomed the interest and the willingness of countries and agencies to contribute to this work and participate in the planned expert group;

(j) Welcomed the proposal by the United Nations Statistics Division to develop a website that would serve as a knowledge base for country practices on environment statistics (see E/2010/24, decision 41/107).

3. The present report describes: (a) progress made since the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission by summarizing the steps that have been implemented in 2010; (b) the conclusions of the first meeting of the Expert Group on the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics; and (c) the way forward.

II. Progress made in 2010

4. In accordance with the decision of the Statistical Commission, the Statistics Division formally convened the Expert Group (see E/CN.3/2010/9, para. 33). In addition to the experts who attended the preparatory meeting in November 2009, the Group includes experts from countries and bodies that expressed an interest in participating in the revision process, including the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. The Expert Group represents 23 countries and 11 international, regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and specialized bodies.

5. The Statistics Division drafted and circulated the following documents to the members of the Expert Group:

- The terms of reference of the Expert Group
- A detailed programme of work with outputs, responsibilities and timelines
- A first provisional annotated outline of the revised Framework
- A list of issues for discussion

6. These documents were revised on the basis of the comments received from the Expert Group. The members were also requested to submit papers on the discussion topics identified in the list of issues.

7. Ms. Iva Ritschelova, President of the Czech Statistical Office, and Mr. Rusman Heriawan, Director General of Statistics Indonesia, accepted the invitation of the Statistics Division to act as co-chairs of the Expert Group and oversee the revision process.

8. The first Expert Group Meeting on the Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, organized by the Division, was held in New York from 8 to 10 November 2010.

9. The agenda of the meeting was developed on the basis of the draft annotated outline of the revised Framework and the issue papers contributed by the members of the Expert Group.

10. The meeting was attended by 29 experts from Australia, Austria, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, India, Italy, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Suriname, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, the European Environment Agency, Eurostat, the World Resources Institute, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa, the Development Policy and Analysis Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting. The experts from Bangladesh, Indonesia, the European Commission Joint Research Centre, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development could not participate in the meeting.

11. The objectives of the Expert Group Meeting were to: (a) reach agreement on a scientific theory that could underpin a conceptual framework for environment

statistics; (b) discuss and, if possible, conclude on the issues presented in the issue papers; (c) finalize the outline of the revised Framework and agree on the general contents of its chapters; (d) agree on the process to establish the core set of environment statistics; and (e) finalize the terms of reference of the Expert Group and the detailed programme of work for 2011.

12. The meeting was organized to comprise the following five sessions:

- Session 1 on the nature of environment statistics (plenary)
- Session 2 on the framework for environment statistics (plenary)
- Session 3 on the core set of environment statistics (plenary)
- Session 4 on the outline of the revised Framework (working groups and plenary)
- Session 5 on conclusions and the work programme (plenary)

13. The discussions were based on 16 issue papers and 6 papers on country practices contributed by the Expert Group. All papers and presentations submitted for the Expert Group Meeting are available and can be downloaded from the Expert Group's website at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/fdes.htm.

14. The main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting are summarized in paragraphs 15 to 22 of the present report. A summary of the way forward is given in paragraph 23. The full report of the Expert Group Meeting, the terms of reference and the programme of work have been submitted to the Statistical Commission as background documents.

III. Main conclusions and recommendations of the first Expert Group Meeting on the Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics

15. The Expert Group concluded that there has not yet been agreement on a single scientific theory upon which the framework for environment statistics could be based. While an agreed scientific theory provides a strong and sound foundation for a conceptual framework, it is not a precondition for beginning the process of revising the 1984 Framework. While the Expert Group deliberates on what scientific theory can best support the conceptual framework, work towards the revision of the Framework and the establishment of a core set of environment statistics must start. It was therefore agreed that work should progress in two parallel processes which should be merged once options for the conceptual framework have been identified and agreed upon by the Expert Group.

16. The Expert Group invited the Statistics Division to initiate the process of revising the 1984 Framework and developing a core set of environment statistics. This work should be guided by the agreed scope and criteria, and should focus on an analysis of the structure and components of the 1984 Framework, identifying and developing the dimensions, building blocks and statistical topics that are not, or not fully, covered by the Framework. The extensive analysis and assessment of country practices, existing regional and international indicator sets, data requirements created by major international environmental conventions and agreements, and new initiatives on measuring green economy and well-being should continue and feed

into the revision of the Framework and should provide the basis for the identification of a core set of environment statistics. A subgroup should be formed by members of the Expert Group to help the Statistics Division in this work.

17. The Expert Group also invited Statistics Canada to further elaborate on its proposal to apply the natural capital theory to developing a conceptual framework for environment statistics, and illustrate the dimensions, structure and contents (statistical topics) of the resulting framework. It was requested that other scientific theories that could underpin a conceptual framework for environment statistics should also be explored, taking into account the Framework and the criteria for a framework agreed upon by the Expert Group. It was suggested that a subgroup be formed by interested Expert Group members to assist Statistics Canada in this work. Once the subgroup has identified options for the conceptual framework, they will be presented to the full Expert Group for discussion.

18. The Statistics Division was requested to put into operation the electronic discussion forum set up on the Expert Group's website to facilitate discussion of interim documents. It was recommended that the discussion should engage a wider spectrum of experts, including the representatives of the scientific and the user community.

19. The Expert Group requested the subgroup led by the Statistics Division to submit the following documents for the next meeting of the Expert Group in May 2011:

- A working paper on the revision of the 1984 Framework containing an analysis of its structure and components, and identifying and developing the dimensions, building blocks and statistical topics that are not, or not fully, covered
- A first draft of the core set of environment statistics with the description of the process that was used for its establishment

20. The Expert Group also requested the subgroup led by Statistics Canada to prepare a working paper on the elaboration of the natural capital theory in terms of the dimensions, structure and contents (statistical topics) of a resulting conceptual framework and on the exploration of other scientific theories that could underpin a conceptual framework for environment statistics, which will be discussed at the next meeting of the Expert Group.

21. The Statistics Division was requested to finalize the terms of reference and the detailed programme of work of the Expert Group in accordance with the conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting and to present them, together with a progress report, for information, at the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission in February 2011.

22. The next meeting of the Expert Group will be held in New York from 4 to 6 May 2011.

IV. The way forward

23. The following table contains the timeline of the revision of the Framework and the establishment of the core set of environment statistics, the expected outputs and responsibilities.

Deadline	*Output*	*Responsibility*
1 April 2011	Working paper on the revision of the 1984 Framework (analysing the structure and components, identifying and developing the dimensions, building blocks and statistical topics that are not, or not fully, covered)	United Nations Statistics Division and subgroup
1 April 2011	A first draft of the core set of environment statistics with the description of the process that was used for its establishment	United Nations Statistics Division and subgroup
1 April 2011	Working paper on the elaboration of the natural capital theory in terms of the dimensions, structure and contents (statistical topics) of a resulting conceptual framework and on the exploration of other scientific theories that could underpin a conceptual framework for environment statistics	Canada and subgroup
4-6 May 2011	Second Expert Group Meeting	United Nations Statistics Division
15 July 2011	First draft of the revised Framework circulated to the Expert Group	United Nations Statistics Division, Statistics Canada
15 July 2011	Second draft of the core set of environment statistics circulated to the Expert Group	United Nations Statistics Division
1 September 2011	Comments received from Expert Group	Expert Group members
15 September 2011	Second draft of the revised Framework	United Nations Statistics Division, Statistics Canada
15 September 2011	Revised draft of the core set of environment statistics	United Nations Statistics Division
30 September-31 October 2011	Global consultation	United Nations Statistics Division
November 2011	Third Expert Group Meeting (virtual)	United Nations Statistics Division
10 December 2011	Report and final drafts of the revised Framework and the core set of environment statistics for the forty-third session of the Statistical Commission	United Nations Statistics Division, Chairpersons

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/29

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (i) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: coordination and integration of statistical programmes

Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24), the present report is submitted summarizing the main conclusions of the fifteenth and sixteenth sessions of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in New York on 22 February 2010 and in Vienna from 1 to 3 September 2010. The Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1.

10-68249 (E) 301210

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2010. The fifteenth session of the Committee was held on 22 February 2010 in New York during the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission, while the sixteenth session of the Committee, hosted jointly by the statistical offices of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was held in Vienna from 1 to 3 September 2010. Both meetings were co-chaired by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and Eurostat. The present report summarizes the main conclusions of the fifteenth and sixteenth sessions of the Committee.

2. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee operates actively between sessions through a network of task teams and electronic discussion groups, following up on the decisions taken during the regular sessions. The established teams choose their own most appropriate working arrangements and hold their own meetings. In this manner, concrete progress is made in the areas that are currently under discussion by the Committee, namely, the development of shared practices regarding human resource management, quality management, use of imputations/estimations and release of microdata. Also, the task teams work on specific coordination tools, such as reporting on technical cooperation activities, and elaborate tangible products like the global inventory on statistical standards. All these areas of work will be further described in detail in the following sections. Task teams prepare documents on the progress and results of their work and report back to the Committee as a whole for decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the United Nations Statistics Division works closely with the co-chairs and facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports of the regular sessions and the annual report to the Statistical Commission; it also maintains the Committee's page on the Division's website (unstats.un.org). It is noteworthy that active participation in the work of the Committee has increased over the past year with about 30 international organizations now participating regularly in the Committee's activities.

II. Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

A. Special session on human capital

3. At its fourteenth session, held in September 2009 in Bangkok, the Committee decided to organize a special session on human capital in conjunction with its sixteenth session. The objective of the special session was to address the current challenges in human resources management in the specific environment of international organizations. The special session brought together managers of international statistical agencies and human resources management experts. It was organized in the following three sessions:

(a) Session 1 explored the extent to which statisticians require special attention in terms of human resources management strategies. During this session the Committee members shared their experience in the recruitment of staff, the

profiling and designing of competences, staff mobility, geographical and gender balance, and initiatives for retaining qualified staff;

(b) Session 2 dealt with the training programmes for statisticians working in international organizations, staff exchanges with national statistical offices and other international agencies, and existing collaboration mechanisms among the Committee members in the field of human resources management;

(c) Session 3 was organized as a round table which discussed how to develop and maintain human capital in official international statistics. In addition, talent acquisition specialists from IAEA presented their experience with headhunting.

4. After an extensive debate on the human resources management issues, the Committee came to the following conclusions:

(a) Human resources management is an important topic for the international statistical agencies as human capital represents their main production factor, and most of their budgets and considerable management time are devoted to it. The key challenges with respect to human resources management include decreasing budgets; increasing competition and competitive pressure from other organizations, including the private sector; the higher level of specialization, skills and information technology knowledge needed; and the heavy burden of bureaucracy;

(b) Human resources management is an appropriate topic for consideration by the Committee, as it is one of the issues faced on a daily basis by statistical managers. For this reason, it is important to have a continuous dialogue among Committee members, but also to have a dialogue with the respective human resources specialists. The future discussions on human resources management should move away from sharing frustration towards sharing experiences and solutions;

(c) International official statisticians, whose number is tentatively estimated at about 2,000 people worldwide, are a professional group with a distinct profile and human resources management needs. It is further recognized that there is subspecialization within the group and shared interests with other professional groups such as analysts, information technology specialists and statisticians at national statistical offices. Recognizing this reality can help international official statisticians identify the potential pool of future candidates as well as the potential for vertical and lateral mobility;

(d) Clearer skill profiles of the group of statisticians working in international agencies as a whole and of its various subgroups will be needed as there exists a gap between some of the existing profiles and the academic training as well as the work expectations of young professional candidates.

5. The Committee decided to establish the following two task teams to work on issues of human resources management:

(a) Task team 1, "Defining the profile of international statisticians and recruitment policies", led by the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Population Division, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries and UNIDO as members, will look into issues of profiling of various subcategories; sharing experience and best practices in recruitment; more effectively identifying

and reaching out to talent pools, academia, etc., and raising awareness about international statisticians as a group;

(b) Task team 2, "Training of international statisticians: staff exchange and mobility", led by the United Nations Statistics Division with UNODC, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Eurostat as members, will focus on identifying training opportunities, including e-learning; look further into mobility and staff exchange issues; and try to document existing models and develop strategies for expanding opportunities.

6. The Committee further decided that the mandates and descriptions of the teams would be refined in a written procedure. First outcomes from the task teams' work should be reported to the Committee at its seventeenth session. A more extensive discussion will take place during the eighteenth session of the Committee, to be held in September 2011.

B. Global statistical system and the role of the Committee

7. The Committee has repeatedly discussed the issue of the governance of the global statistical system and the specific role of the Committee in its management and functioning. At its fifteenth session, the Committee took note of the presentation made by the two co-chairs on this topic and agreed that during its sixteenth session, a discussion on one selected global project would be held. It was further agreed that the agenda for the discussion would focus on the horizontal issues that were common to all Committee members and would explore: (a) the Committee's role in implementation of the global projects from the perspective of international organizations; and (b) how to bring new items to the agenda of the global statistical system.

8. At its sixteenth session, the Committee considered the presentation made by the co-chair Eurostat, which analysed the structure of the global statistical system and outlined the role of the Committee in the implementation of global statistical projects. The revision of the System of National Accounts 2008 was analysed as a specific example of a global project which had its own governance structure; was led in a good spirit of cooperation by international organization members of the Committee; and involved all stakeholders in the global statistical system, especially countries. The presentation identified the following weak points in the structure and process of the project: (a) the limited number of donors; (b) some controversial issues with other international organizations that were not part of the governance structure of this particular project; and (c) the continuous need for a high-level expertise which had put the project's execution and implementation at risk.

9. The subsequent rich discussion focused specifically on the lessons learned from the System of National Accounts 2008 revision process and, more generally, on the possible enhanced role that the Committee could play in other global projects. Two key functions of the Committee emerged as the most important: (a) to keep all its members informed throughout different phases of the project; and (b) to be more proactive and forward-looking in setting its agenda for the future. The Committee supported the proposal made by the co-chair, Eurostat, to build into its future agenda "peer advice forums" which would allow discussion of issues of specific sectors or statistical domains such as the International Comparison Programme and agricultural statistics. Also, owing to the high level of interest in the

System of National Accounts 2008, the Committee decided to consider its implementation as a new and separate global project and to retain it as an item on its agenda, and to have a discussion on the implications for the Committee members during its February 2011 session. The Committee further decided that in order to be proactive, it would be helpful to look into the multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Statistical Commission in advance and, if necessary, give the Committee's position on it during the plenary discussion at the Commission's session. The first review of the programme will take place during the seventeenth session of the Committee, to be held in February 2011.

C. Global inventory on statistical standards

10. The initiative by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico to create an inventory of international statistical standards and its transformation into a global inventory under the auspices of the Committee was extensively discussed during the fifteenth and sixteenth sessions. In response to the Statistical Commission's request, a separate report by the Committee on the progress on the inventory's development is being presented to the forty-second session of the Commission (see E/CN.3/2011/30).

D. Coordination of capacity-building activities of international organizations in developing countries

11. The coordination of capacity-building activities of international organizations was first discussed during the special session on statistical capacity-building, convened in conjunction with the eighth session of the Committee held in Montreal, Canada, in September 2006. Subsequently, the Committee established four task teams to deal with various aspects related to the inter-agency coordination of statistical capacity-building efforts and technical assistance to developing countries. The reasons for putting this topic again on the agenda of the sixteenth session of the Committee were: (a) to provide an update on what had happened in this area since the four task teams concluded their mandates; and (b) to clarify whether the Committee members felt that there still remained unresolved issues with respect to the coordination of technical assistance.

12. During a round-table discussion organized at its sixteenth session, the Committee members gave a brief overview of the recent developments in capacity-building activities and existing mechanisms for cooperation and coordination with other partners in their respective organizations. The Committee reached a consensus that despite the good progress achieved in coordinating statistical capacity-building activities since 2006, the issue was important and required continued attention. Therefore, the Committee decided to have a more extensive discussion on issues of coordination of capacity-building activities at its eighteenth session, to be held in September 2011. The World Bank and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) were requested to take the lead in preparing the agenda and organizing the discussion.

E. Reporting mechanism on statistical capacity-building activities

13. At its fifteenth session, the Committee discussed the *Partner Report on Support to Statistics — PRESS*, published by PARIS21 (see E/CN.3/2011/19). The latest report addressed the concerns raised by the Committee during previous sessions, namely, the low response rate, potential double counting, and reporting of commitments versus disbursements of funds in support of statistical development. The experience of one organization, Eurostat, was presented as a case study on the use of PRESS data. Some Committee members shared their experience with providing information to PRESS and noted that the reporting of funding data for statistical capacity-building activities could pose some difficulties for them owing to the nature and organization of their budget procedures. Other members made recommendations for further improving the representation of geographical and statistical areas in PRESS as well as for expanding its web version by the inclusion of searchable tools. The Committee thanked PARIS21 for taking these concerns into consideration and for continuously working towards the improvement of PRESS. The Committee also expressed satisfaction with the new, more user-friendly version of PRESS. The Committee members were encouraged to report to the 2010 round of PRESS, and those that might experience difficulties with reporting of actual commitments disbursements were advised to provide approximations.

14. At its sixteenth session, the Committee discussed the progress of the 2010 round of PRESS. Noticeable progress had been observed since the 2008 round, both in terms of partners that provided data and projects reported. The Committee congratulated the PARIS21 secretariat for the success of the PRESS exercise, noting with satisfaction the advantages of the newly introduced online system for collecting and validating partner data. Several Committee members particularly acknowledged the cooperative and helpful attitude of the PARIS21 staff who had guided them and facilitated their replies to the PRESS questionnaire. Furthermore, as an outcome of the round-table discussion on coordination of capacity-building activities, PARIS21 was requested to provide an update on its work on measuring the effectiveness of statistical capacity-building to the Commission at its seventeenth session, to be held in February 2011.

F. Use of non-official data in imputations/estimations made by the international organizations

15. At its sixteenth session, the Committee took note of the final report on the use of non-official data in imputations/estimations made by the international organizations prepared by WTO and of the contribution by UNODC to that report. Based on the endorsed terms of reference, the report clearly identified the institutional, practical and technical issues in the use of non-official data, illustrated them with appropriate examples from the current practice of selected international organizations, and concluded with a series of recommendations, valid for various types of imputation. The review of experiences in the use of non-official sources both in the paper and in the subsequent discussion showed that they represented a potential source for supplementary value added in the work of international organizations and that a large array of strategies existed depending on the different statistical "business models" of each international organization. Concerning the third item of the terms of reference, namely, whether and when this issue should be

brought to the attention of the Statistical Commission. WTO and other members of the team who had prepared the paper concluded that while continuous dialogue with Member States on this issue was important, it would be premature to bring it formally to the Statistical Commission.

16. The Committee welcomed the report as it addressed issues that were important for all of its members. After an extensive discussion, the Committee concluded that a new task team should be established which, based on the comprehensive documentation, outcomes from discussions of this and earlier meetings and the in-depth review by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) on the use of secondary sources, would formulate for the next session of the Committee best practices in combining different data sources for the production of international statistics, taking into account the issues of transparency of methods used, stability of data sources and quality assurance. The team would be led by ECE with Eurostat, UNODC, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Bank, UNIDO and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) as members. The first update on progress in the team's work was expected during the next session of the Committee, to be held in February 2011.

G. Dissemination of microdata by the international organizations

17. At its sixteenth session, the Committee considered a proposal to initiate a discussion on the issue of access to and dissemination of microdata by international organizations, as presented in the report of UNODC. There was no legal basis at the international level that defined access to microdata. General guidance for protection of the confidentiality of collected individual data about natural persons and legal entities was included in the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities (principle 6), but operational aspects in the context of international organizations had not yet been discussed. Extensive guidelines for accessing microdata and managing statistical confidentiality[1] had been developed by the Conference of European Statisticians and subsequently adopted by the Statistical Commission; however, they concerned mainly the work of national statistical systems.

18. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee members expressed sufficient support for the proposal and the Committee decided to include the issue on the agenda of its subsequent sessions. The Committee further stressed that the access to and dissemination of microdata by international organizations had many dimensions. Additional work and more detailed discussion would be necessary for exploring some specific challenges pointed out by the Committee members who had experience with managing microdata, such as those related to the ownership of the data, the geo-spatial aspect in cases of anonymizing data, difficulties with obtaining consent of a country's authorities, etc.

19. The Committee agreed to create a new task team, led by UNODC, with the aim of looking into the issue further and preparing terms of reference for what had to be done in this field. As a starting point in the task team's work, and to avoid

[1] *Managing Statistical Confidentiality and Microdata Access, Principles and Guidelines of Good Practice*, United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.07.II.E.7.

duplication of efforts, the Committee recommended that the existing guidelines on this topic prepared by the Conference of European Statisticians should be consulted to see how they would relate to the work of international organizations. The World Bank, UN-Habitat, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, ECE, FAO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees volunteered to be part of the task team. The task team was requested to submit a progress report to the Commission at its seventeenth session, to be held in February 2011.

H. Establishment of a network of statisticians working in international organizations

20. At its fifteenth session, the Committee took note of the oral presentation made by ESCAP on progress in the establishment of a network of statisticians working in international organizations. The Committee was informed that a group of team members had had an initial exchange of ideas and a discussion on the potential future steps of this initiative. Until the next session, the team would work on a concept paper which should be presented for discussion at the sixteenth session of Committee, in September 2010. As a concrete first step, the team proposed to identify two or three statisticians to be focal points in each member organization who were committed to the highest professional principles and who would form the core of the network. They were expected to share their experience and push for more creative ideas and projects.

21. At its sixteenth session, the Committee considered a proposal to establish a network of international statisticians, prepared by a team comprising ESCAP, Eurostat, the International Labour Organization, UNODC and the World Bank. The proposal highlighted the unique role of international statisticians in the global statistical system and argued for the need to establish a network for this distinct professional group. The objectives of the network, its membership, governance structure and functioning, the financing of possible activities and its relationship with other international statistical associations such as the International Statistical Institute and the International Association for Official Statistics, were among the key issues.

22. The Committee welcomed this interesting initiative, which focused on professionalism and aimed at raising the professional profile of international statisticians and facilitating the exchange of information, training and contacts in general among them. While there was overall support for the proposed network, caution regarding membership, funding principles and the relationship with the International Association for Official Statistics was advised. The Committee was of the view that there were two possible options for the launch of such a network: (a) as a committee of the International Statistical Institute with individual membership, as proposed in the paper; and (b) as a club with a corporate membership model, whose members by definition would be all those working in international organizations. It was decided that a task team would be established to elaborate in more detail the terms of reference of a potential club of statisticians working in international organizations. The task team would be led by ESCAP with the following organizations as members: World Bank, UNODC, Eurostat and IMF. The team would also develop a structure and look into the administrative, legal and financial aspects of a club that would allow each of the international organizations

to participate. The Committee requested the task team to prepare a progress report for its seventeenth session, to be held in February 2011.

I. Conference on Data Quality for International Organizations

23. At its fifteenth session, the Committee took note of the proposed agenda of the Conference on Data Quality for International Organizations, which would be held immediately following the European Conference on Quality in Statistics, held in Helsinki from 4 to 6 May 2010. The United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat, on behalf of the organizing committee, requested the individual agencies to make a commitment to attend the Conference on Data Quality and contribute to its organization by making presentations and chairing sessions. The Committee members reconfirmed their intention to attend and suggested some modifications to the proposed agenda. The Statistics Division, in accordance with the Committee's request, collected concrete proposals for presentations, finalized the agenda and circulated it electronically among members.

24. At its sixteenth session, the Committee made an evaluation of the Conference on Data Quality for International Organizations. The general feeling of the Committee members was that in the future this event, held back-to-back with the European Conference, should be oriented towards training, targeting working-level/junior statisticians among the Committee's member organizations. However, having in mind the importance of quality for the entire work of international organizations, the Committee further decided to keep the issue on its agenda for subsequent sessions. How to communicate quality to users and how to foster a "quality culture" were suggested as topics for discussion. The Committee decided to have a more comprehensive discussion on this issue at its eighteenth session, to be held in September 2011, and invited WTO and the European Central Bank to identify the key issues for an initial exchange of views during the seventeenth session of the Committee, to be held in February 2011.

J. Observance of the first World Statistics Day

25. The Committee had regularly taken note of the progress in the organization of the first World Statistics Day. The United Nations Statistics Division strongly encouraged all Committee members to make a contribution in their respective subject-matter areas and location and pledged to assist them with the overall coordination of the events worldwide and their publicizing on the designated website. Individual members also kept the Committee informed about their initiatives for the observance. A comprehensive evaluation of the experience with the organization of World Statistics Day, prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, is being presented to the Commission at its forty-second session (E/CN.3/2011/2).

K. Other issues discussed

26. At its fifteenth session, ITU informed the Committee about the International Seminar on Information and Communication Technology Statistics, jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division, ITU, the United Nations

Conference on Trade and Development and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Korea and in collaboration with the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development in Seoul from 19 to 21 July 2010. The Committee members were invited to take part in the seminar.

27. At the sixteenth session of the Committee, the World Bank, the current leader of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) sponsor group, provided a brief description of the status of the SDMX partnership and programme of work (see E/CN.3/2011/31). The Committee was informed that: (a) since the last update, the partnership had held three meetings; (b) the work on a new technical standard (version 2.1), which would enhance the functionality of the system, was well under way; (c) two working groups, technical and statistical, would be set up and were expected to become operational by the end of 2010; and (d) the third SDMX Global Conference would be hosted jointly by the World Bank and IMF in Washington, D.C., from 2 to 4 May 2011. The World Bank and other sponsors welcomed the ECE initiative to organize a seminar on SDMX for national statistical offices during the June 2011 meeting of the Conference of European Statisticians and had committed to prepare a paper for it.

28. At its sixteenth session, FAO informed the Committee about the outcomes from the Symposium on Information Systems for Food Security (ISFS), held on 1 and 2 September 2010 in Brussels. ISFS had initially tried to address mainly early-warning and short-term emergency responses to food crises, but was increasingly serving the needs for information that supported food crisis prevention and preparedness. Moreover, there was wide recognition that ISFS should also inform long-term development actions such as poverty reduction strategies and the adaptation of farming systems to climate change. Statistics was the key component of ISFS and good quality, reliable, timely and transparent data were essential to identify appropriate development policies and emergency responses. It was noted that although work on ISFS had implications for the activities of many of the Committee's members, so far the statistical community had not been involved in the discussions of this important issue. FAO therefore proposed that a new task team should be created which would develop a set of statistical indicators and establish statistical standards in the food security domain. The Committee agreed to take up the issue and requested FAO to prepare a document describing the way forward for its February 2011 session.

29. Representatives of UNHCR attended the sixteenth session of the Committee as observers. The co-chairs informed them about the formal procedure for application as stated in the terms of reference of the Committee and invited them to communicate their decision to the secretariat.

30. The Committee agreed that its seventeenth session would be held in New York, in the morning of 21 February 2011, in conjunction with the forty-second session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Committee was pleased to accept Eurostat's offer to host its eighteenth session in Luxembourg from 7 to 9 September 2011.

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/30

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (j) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: inventory of global statistical standards

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities on the inventory of global statistical standards

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.B), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities on its progress in establishing an inventory of global statistical standards, based on a system originally developed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico. The Commission is invited to take note of this progress report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1.

10-68225 (E) 201210

Please recycle

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities on the inventory of global statistical standards

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session the Commission considered a report prepared by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) on its efforts to elaborate an inventory of international statistical standards (E/CN.3/2010/14). The development of this inventory had been motivated by a requirement of the new Mexican statistical law that national methodologies concord with international recommendations and standards. Mexico offered this system to the international community as a useful frame of reference. In addition, it was suggested that there be a process for reviewing, validating and updating the system in the future, in close collaboration with the international organizations that are responsible for maintaining the various standards in the different subject matter areas.

2. The Statistical Commission, in its decision 41/111, welcomed the proposal of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities to create appropriate mechanisms for the further development and maintenance of the inventory of global statistical standards and requested it to propose a proper classification of those standards, and also requested it to submit a progress report to the Commission at its forty-second session.

II. Review of the system by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

3. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities first considered the topic of a global inventory of statistical standards at its fifteenth session, held in New York on 22 February 2010 (see E/CN.3/2011/29), on the basis of a paper and a presentation by a representative of INEGI. The Committee noted that the further development and maintenance of the inventory would require significant efforts on the part of all its members. In the absence of a definition of what constituted an "international statistical standard", the Committee decided that it was imperative to look into that issue and devise a practical proposal regarding the coverage of such a global database. Questions were also raised regarding the inclusion of "regional standards", the translation of the entire database and the need for a classification of statistical domains. The Committee requested a group composed of representatives of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with INEGI, to prepare and present to its sixteenth session a concept paper on how to develop the global inventory further, including proposals on how to ensure its future maintenance.

4. At its sixteenth session, held in Vienna from 1 to 3 September 2010 (ibid.), the Committee considered this issue further on the basis of a report prepared by ECE on behalf of the task team that had analysed the following aspects of the system and presented its conclusions thereon.

A. Purpose

5. The inventory is intended to provide a knowledge centre and reference system for international statistical standards. It therefore needs to be complete, up-to-date, trustworthy and readily available for users.

6. As a reference system, the inventory can also serve as an analytical tool for international organizations and groups, to help identify statistical areas requiring recommendations or standards as well as to identify overlapping standards. It will therefore provide the basis for the Statistical Commission to manage the system of global statistical standards.

7. It is proposed that the inventory be developed in phases. The first phase will provide a system that meets the main requirements, with a limited level of detail. User feedback will help to determine the content and priorities of future phases, though ideas for future work are included in some of the following sections.

B. Users

8. As well as the Statistical Commission and international organizations, the inventory is expected to be used by professionals in national statistical organizations, the research community and the general public.

C. Coverage

9. The main issues concerning coverage are, firstly, to define what is meant by a "statistical standard" and secondly, to determine the scope of the standards to be included in the inventory. Concerning the definition of a statistical standard, it is proposed to follow the one given in annex 4 — Metadata Common Vocabulary to the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) Content-oriented Guidelines, 2009[1]: "An agreed rule or guideline on how one or more parts of the statistical business process should be carried out, conforming with requirements for professionalism".

10. In this context, "an agreed rule or guideline" should be interpreted as one which has been adopted by an international body and/or published by an international organization. The "requirements for professionalism" are those enshrined in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities and the International Statistical Institute Declaration on Professional Ethics.

11. Concerning the scope of standards, it is proposed to include:

- All official methodological publications of Committee members
- Internationally agreed statistical classifications
- Standards published by a body outside the international statistical system, but widely used by statistical organizations (e.g. some International Organization for Standardization standards)

[1] Available from http://sdmx.org/?page_id=11.

- Global and regional standards adopted by the relevant global or regional statistical bodies, including regional versions of global standards
- Information about previous versions of standards where these are still used

12. Standards that are used only within one country or organization will not be included in the inventory.

13. In the first phase of the project, the main entry for the inventory should be the official publication rather than the individual concepts and definitions included therein. However, this may not provide sufficient detail for the purposes of checking the coherence of standards and measuring compliance, so it may be necessary to move to a more detailed level later.

D. Classification

14. It is proposed to use the classification of statistical activities developed for the ECE Database of International Statistical Activities (DISA). This list of statistical activities is managed by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians and has also been adopted as a standard by other organizations and initiatives (e.g. SDMX and PARIS21).

15. It is also proposed to relax the usual rule that items can only be allocated to one category of a classification, in the interests of helping users find relevant standards. For example, the "System of National Accounts" is most relevant to category 2.2 (Economic accounts) of the classification of statistical activities, but is also relevant to several other categories. A reference system based on keywords related to one or more categories could be envisaged in future phases of the development of the inventory.

E. Information contents

16. The inventory should contain structured entries describing each standard and providing links to further information. After having reviewed the metadata model used by INEGI for its inventory and the template used in the Conference of European Statisticians' Common Metadata Framework inventory of standards related to statistical metadata,[2] the information content model as shown in the following table was proposed for the inventory.

[2] The Common Metadata Framework concentrates on different practical and theoretical aspects of statistical metadata systems and provides vital knowledge for anyone working with statistical metadata. Part B deals with metadata concepts, standards, models and registries, and can be found at www.unece.org/stats/cmf.

Table
Proposed information content model for the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards

Element	*Description*
Name	Full official name of the standard, plus any alternative names and acronyms
Version	The version of the standard (where applicable)
Valid from	Date on which the standard was adopted (or published)
Previous versions	References and links to previous versions of the standard
Description	Brief description of the standard, including objective, intended use and relationship to other standards
Maintenance organization	Organization or group responsible for approving and maintaining the standard
Statistical domain(s)	Domains in which the standard is used (according to the DISA classification of statistical activities)
Type of standard	Categories: (a) Concepts and definitions; (b) Classifications; (c) Methodologies and procedures. (*Note*: other categories could be added in the future if needed.)
References	References and links to the standard and any other material that helps understanding or implementation
Language	Language(s) in which the standard is published
Information last updated/validated	Date on which the above information was last updated or verified to be correct

F. Functionality

17. The three main use-cases envisaged at this stage are:

- A user wants to find information about a specific standard
- A user wants to find information about standards relevant for a specific statistical domain or part of the statistical production process
- International organizations want to manage the system of statistical standards (identify gaps and overlaps, measure compliance, etc.)

18. A simple, user-friendly interface is therefore required, allowing standards to be found by using a search function and by using the domain classification. On finding

the description of the standard, the user should be able to easily navigate to the standard itself (if it exists in electronic form on the Internet). There should also be links to supporting material concerning the standard and its implementation, and to related standards.

19. Conceptual maps describing relations between groups of standards could be a useful addition, but are probably not essential for the first phase of the inventory. Work on this sort of mapping is currently under way for metadata-related standards.

20. Functionality for maintenance of the inventory should also be considered. This task is likely to be spread among a number of editors from various international organizations and other authorized bodies in different locations. This will require a remote-access facility with authentication for users granted update rights. Those updating the inventory are unlikely to be information technology specialists, so a user-friendly text-editor interface will be required.

21. The processes and tools for maintaining the inventory are discussed further below.

G. Languages

22. There is a clear need to find a balance between the user requirement for information in many different languages and the substantial costs of managing and ensuring the consistency of a multilingual system. While it is relatively easy to manage multiple-language versions of the headings in a template, it is less easy to manage free-text fields. It might therefore be preferable to structure information in the template as much as possible (for example, using options in drop-down menus rather than free-text fields). The feasibility of linking free-text fields to an automatic translation engine (e.g. Google Translate or Babelfish) should also be considered. While automatic translations are often far from perfect, they are gradually improving and may be sufficient in this case.

H. Maintenance

23. The resource requirement for maintaining an inventory of this type should not be underestimated. A long-term commitment to providing sustainable resources should be made before the project starts, to avoid the result becoming just another out-of-date website.

24. It is also likely that a certain amount of domain-specific knowledge will be needed to maintain the inventory. A single administrator could not be expected to follow developments in all statistical domains. For this reason, it is proposed to appoint a domain editor for each statistical domain. This person will be an expert in his/her field from a national or international statistical organization, and may also represent an international expert group covering the specific domain. One person can cover more than one domain where appropriate.

25. There will also be a requirement for one person (plus back up) to administer the inventory website, including allocating permission to editors and monitoring site usage.

26. It would also help to have an editorial board to take responsibility for matters of content, such as changes to the template, classifying statistical standards by domain and deciding whether specific standards meet the criteria for inclusion in the inventory. This clearly requires an expert-level group with experience of working with statistical standards.

I. Platform

27. The experiences of managing DISA and the Common Metadata Framework inventory of metadata standards suggest that a "wiki" would be the most appropriate technical platform for the inventory. This approach seems to be the simplest, most cost-effective solution. It would allow controlled remote access for editors and provide the other functional requirements identified in the preceding sections.

III. Development of a prototype

28. The Committee recommended that the group working on the inventory should take a pragmatic approach to its development. Specifically, it was proposed that the inventory be developed in phases. The first phase would provide a prototype that met the main requirements and contain a limited level of information detail. User feedback would help determine the priorities for a second or, if necessary, additional future phases. The development of the inventory would be based on the following principles:

- Ownership — while the practical overall execution of the project lies with the United Nations Statistics Division, the inventory will need to be owned in partnership by all CCSA members
- Location — the inventory will be hosted by the United Nations Statistics Division
- Maintenance — substantial investments will be required during the first phase of the project; the follow-up maintenance is expected to be fairly easy. Decentralized data entry with remote update under the coordination of the Division was favoured, with key organizations responsible for their respective subject-matter domains
- Language — the inventory has to be developed first in English, keeping the corresponding existing references in Spanish to the extent possible
- Classification of statistical activities — DISA was considered to be an appropriate starting point for the inventory. Given that the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians is the custodian of DISA, all proposals for modifications and/or inclusion of new domains will need to be brought to its attention
- Types of standards — further work is needed to clarify borderline cases of international standards, guidelines, etc.
- Quality of the inventory — this will depend on the metadata references for the documents included

29. The Committee has requested a group composed of ECE, the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank, ILO and INEGI to draft more detailed terms of reference describing all the procedures identified in the discussion. The group was also requested to prepare a prototype of the inventory and to present it at the seventeenth session of the Committee to be held in February 2011. ECE and the United Nations Statistics Division have taken the lead in the development of this prototype, which is wiki-based. As there is an increasing trend towards process-based standardization, it is being considered to add a process dimension to the classification of standards, based on the Generic Statistics Business Process Model developed by the ECE/Eurostat/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development group on statistical metadata.[3] A first version of the prototype will be ready for demonstration by the time of the forty-second session of the Statistical Commission.

[3] See www.unece.org/stats/gsbpm.

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/31

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (k) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata

Progress report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session, (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the progress report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange, which is presented to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1

10-66589 (E) 151210

Please recycle

Progress report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange

I. Introduction

1. In 2001, the Bank for International Settlements, the European Central Bank, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations joined together to develop more efficient processes and standards for exchanging and sharing data and metadata within the scope of their statistical activities. The World Bank joined the initial group of sponsor organizations in 2003.

2. The aim of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative is to create and maintain technical and statistical standards and guidelines, together with information technology architecture and tools, to be used and implemented by the sponsor or other organizations dealing with statistical data and metadata. Combined with modern information technologies, these SDMX standards and guidelines should improve efficiency by preventing duplication of effort. The SDMX standards and guidelines build on existing technical and statistical standards. With the 2009 releases, the SDMX standards and guidelines reached a high level of maturity and are ready for broad implementation

3. The Statistical Commission has received SDMX progress reports since 2002. The Commission has recognized and supported the SDMX standards and guidelines as "the preferred standard for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata", requested the sponsors to continue their work and encouraged national and international statistical organisations to increase the use and implementation of SDMX.[1]

II. SDMX developments in 2010/2011

A. SDMX technical standards 2.1

4. SDMX technical standards 2.0 are currently being revised. The draft 2.1 technical standards fix bugs and improve technical features relating to web services, structure queries and registry interface reconciliation, code lists and the SDMX data formats. Backward compatibility is ensured as much as possible and conversion issues will be explained in the underlying documentation. After a public consultation period in late 2010, the SDMX sponsors aim to release the SDMX 2.1 technical standards in the first months of 2011.

B. SDMX governance

5. The SDMX sponsors decided to strengthen the involvement of national data-producing agencies in the maintenance and development of SDMX by setting up two SDMX working groups, one covering SDMX technical standards and one

[1] Decision 39/112 in *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 4* (E/2008/24), chap. I.B.

looking into the SDMX content-oriented guidelines. A call for participation in these two groups was sent out to the constituencies of SDMX sponsors in late 2010. Based on agreed terms of reference, the two SDMX working groups should start their work in 2011.

C. Implementation of SDMX among sponsoring and other statistical organizations

6. Further progress was made in implementing SDMX among sponsoring and other statistical organizations. Main flagship activities include:

- Use of the SDMX hub architecture for specific statistical domains or broader data sets (e.g. for the Principal Global Indicators or for the European Union population and housing census 2011)
- Use of the SDMX Content-Oriented Guidelines for international metadata standards (such as the BPM6 and the Euro SDMX Metadata Structure)

7. However, the implementation of the SDMX standards and guidelines in statistical organizations has hit increased resource constraints resulting from the economic and financial crisis. Organizations have also expressed the need for more SDMX data structure definitions used in statistical domains.

D. SDMX Global Conference 2011

8. The next SDMX Global Conference will take place in Washington D.C., from 2 to 4 May 2011. The draft programme is available on the SDMX website (http://sdmx.org) and the SDMX sponsors are calling for contributions and papers. The conference will focus on the use and implementation of the SDMX standards and guidelines, with specific emphasis on cases of practical use, and will illustrate the costs/benefits of SDMX for statistical organizations. It will also take stock of what has been achieved after 10 years of SDMX development.

E. SDMX capacity-building

9. Knowledge about SDMX is continuing to accrue at national and international levels within each of the sponsoring organizations and their respective constituencies. Seminars and workshops are being held all over the world to discuss how to use and implement SDMX at various levels (e.g. the SDMX workshop for South American countries in February 2011). Moreover, additional SDMX self-learning packages are now available on the SDMX website.

III. Summary

10. The SDMX technical and statistical standards and guidelines, combined with information technology architecture and tools, facilitate the efficient exchange and sharing of statistical data and metadata. SDMX plays a leading role in supporting the improvement and integration of statistical business processes. This is gaining importance in many statistical organizations around the world, as a result of increasing resource constraints.

11. SDMX is increasingly used and implemented in statistical organizations. Both national and international organizations are involved in SDMX, maintaining the SDMX standards and guidelines and implementing them in statistical domains.

12. SDMX capacity-building is progressing at many levels on the basis of seminars, workshops and other knowledge-building facilities.

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (l) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions

Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the present note is submitted to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly adopted in 2010 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Council and the Assembly. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1.

10-68210 (E) 211210

Please recycle

Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

I. World Statistics Day

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

1. Acknowledging the importance of reliable and timely statistics and indicators of a country's progress, which were indispensable for informed policy decision-making and monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly, in resolution 64/267, decided to designate 20 October as World Statistics Day. In its resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps for the United Nations to observe the Day, to bring the text to the attention of Member States and United Nations organizations, and to report on its implementation to the Statistical Commission at its forty-second session. Further, the Assembly invited stakeholders from the United Nations system and civil society to observe the Day appropriately.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

2. At its forty-second session, the Statistical Commission, under agenda item 3 (a), will discuss a report (E/CN.3/2011/2) which presents an overview of activities undertaken by the statistical community worldwide to mark the first World Statistics Day, held on 20 October 2010. The Commission will in particular discuss the relevance and effectiveness of the activities and proposed options for future celebrations of World Statistics Day.

II. Follow-up to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

3. The outcome document of the High-level Meeting (resolution 65/1) was adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2010. It includes an action agenda for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The document makes reference to data and statistics in three places:

(a) In paragraph 68, the Heads of State and Government recognize that all countries require adequate, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including demographic data, in order to design better programmes and policies for sustainable development; commit to strengthening national statistical systems, including for effectively monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals; and reiterate the need to increase efforts in support of statistical capacity-building in developing countries;

(b) In paragraph 72 (h), the signatories commit themselves to accelerating progress in achieving Goal 3 by improving national-level capacity to monitor and report on progress, gaps and opportunities through better generation and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data, including with the support of the international community;

(c) In paragraph 73 (j), the signatories pledge to support the use of national data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems that can track sex-disaggregated access to health-care services.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

4. Since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators as well as related issues of capacity-building on a continuous basis. At its forty-second session, the Commission will consider reports of the Secretary-General on development indicators (E/CN.3/2011/13) and on statistical capacity-building (E/CN.3/2011/18).

5. The United Nations Statistics Division currently executes several multi-year statistical capacity-building projects covering a wide range of statistical areas with a special focus on data collection and dissemination of indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the Division also executes several capacity-building projects in support of the 2010 population and housing census round and for the improvement of gender statistics. This will contribute to increasing the availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data.

III. Multi-year programme of work for annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

6. As mandated in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions is to be held annually in the beginning of the year. Furthermore, the Council adopted its first multi-year work programme for the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews in October 2007. In its decision 2008/258, the Council decided to adopt for its annual ministerial-level substantive review for 2011 the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education". The substantive contributions of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential for the success of the reviews.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

7. The Chair of the Statistical Commission will participate in the meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council with the chairs of the functional commissions, to be held on 16 February 2011, and will provide input to the Council's 2011 annual ministerial review. The Chair will brief the Bureau of the Council on the Commission's methodological work in the area of education statistics. The Statistical Commission had conducted an in-depth programme review of education statistics in 2007 (see E/2007/24). The Commission will consider education statistics at its forty-second session under agenda item 4 (c) on the basis of a report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization focusing on the establishment of an intersecretariat working group on education statistics and the proposed revisions to the International Standard Classifications of Education (E/CN.3/2011/23).

IV. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

8. At the initiative of the Statistical Commission, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2005/13 on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, in which it requested increased support for the Programme in terms of strengthening the capacity of national statistical programmes. The Council also adopted resolution 2006/6 on strengthening national statistical capacity.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

9. At its forty-second session, the Commission will consider specific follow-up actions to the Council resolutions cited above under agenda item 4 (a), "Population and housing censuses", item 3 (l), "Statistical capacity-building" and item 3 (j), "Statistics on human development". The documentation presented under these items (see E/CN.3/2011/1) describes in detail activities undertaken by the Statistics Division and by its partner agencies to improve the availability and quality of data, in supporting the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round and to improve the coordination of technical cooperation activities.

V. Global geospatial information management

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

10. At the initiative of the eighteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (see E/CONF.100/9) and the Statistical

Commission (decision 41/110), the Economic and Social Council, in decision 2010/240, decided to request the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its 2011 substantive session a report on global geospatial information management.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

11. The Commission is kept informed of the latest developments in this field. At the forty-second session, it will consider global geospatial information management under agenda item 4 (n). It will have before it a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2011/34).

VI. Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data on ageing and people with disabilities

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

12. At the time of drafting the present document, two draft resolutions on persons with disability and on ageing were being considered by the General Assembly. Both would call for efforts to improve data collection with respect to persons with disabilities and on ageing.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

13. The Commission continues to be active in both of these important policy areas, supporting the development of new methodologies where necessary and improving the collection of data. Data generated by the current 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme will improve the availability of information regarding ageing (see also sect. IV above). The issue of disability statistics is regularly considered by the Commission: the Commission reviewed the progress of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics regarding the development of suitable questions to be included in national censuses or sample-based national surveys at its forty-first session (see E/CN.3/2010/20). The item will again be on the agenda in 2012.

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/33

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (m) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: national quality assurance frameworks

National quality assurance frameworks

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (E/2010/24, chap. I.A). It summarizes the activities and discussions undertaken by the United Nations Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks in response to recommendations made by the Commission at its forty-first session and presents its programme of work for 2011. The report is submitted to the Commission for information.

* E/CN.3/2011/1.

10-67446 (E) 171210

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session, the Statistical Commission had before it the report of Statistics Canada, which contained a programme review on national quality assurance frameworks (E/CN.3/2010/2). Based on a global consultation process, the report presented a review of current quality concepts, frameworks and tools; advocated the use by national statistical offices of a national quality assurance framework and described its basic elements; put forward three illustrative proposals for a generic template for such a framework which, it suggested, should be accompanied by guidelines to assist national statistical offices in the formulation of their individual frameworks; and outlined a process for developing the generic template and guidelines.

2. The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the high-quality programme review contained in the report of Statistics Canada on national quality assurance frameworks and expressed its appreciation to Statistics Canada for the work that it had carried out as programme reviewer;

(b) Thanked the Statistical Office of the European Communities and the International Monetary Fund for their contributions to the report and expressed gratitude to regional agencies and States that had provided valuable comments on the draft version;

(c) Emphasized the importance of the topic and fully supported the development of a quality assurance framework template that would focus on national statistical systems, using existing frameworks to the extent possible, and that would be sufficiently flexible to take national circumstances into consideration;

(d) Recognized that such a template is only a first step in the process of developing a full quality management programme;

(e) Supported the establishment of an expert group on quality assurance, with due consideration to be given to proper regional representation, and welcomed the offers made by States and international agencies to serve in the group;

(f) Recognized the importance of engaging users, especially in the regional consultation processes proposed;

(g) Requested that the United Nations Statistics Division and international agencies develop tools and provide guidance and training, especially to developing countries that wish to introduce or strengthen their quality management procedures. In this context, the Commission asked the Division to upgrade its quality assurance website to include links to relevant quality assurance tools and guidelines already developed by States and international agencies.

II. Establishment of the United Nations Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks and its terms of reference

A. Members of the Expert Group

3. The United Nations Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks was constituted in August 2010. Representatives of the following 17 countries were invited to serve as members: Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Qatar, South Africa, Switzerland and Ukraine. In addition, the following agencies and international organizations were invited to serve as observers: the Statistical Office of the European Communities, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. South Africa agreed to serve as the Chair of the Expert Group, with the Statistics Division acting as the secretariat.

B. Terms of reference

4. It was decided that, at least in the early stages, the Expert Group would conduct most of its discussions by means of e-mail exchanges. The Expert Group's work was seen as falling into two stages: (a) defining the scope and content of the generic national quality assurance framework template, developing the template while taking existing frameworks into account and establishing a mapping exercise for them, and formulating, to the extent possible, standard terminology on quality; and (b) drawing up a training and knowledge transfer strategy, including guidelines for the application of the template with real examples drawn from national statistical offices working in different environments. The Expert Group would present a progress report to the Commission in 2011 and aim to complete its work in time to present its conclusions and recommendations to the Statistical Commission in 2012.

III. Progress report on discussions and work undertaken

5. The Chair and the secretariat launched the initial discussion by soliciting input from all members and observers of the Expert Group on a set of questions pertaining to:

- Each State's or agency's experiences with the development or use of a national quality assurance framework;
- The problems and obstacles experienced or anticipated in developing and implementing a national quality assurance framework;
- The main needs and priorities from a country perspective vis-à-vis the development and implementation of a national quality assurance framework;
- Initial comments regarding the three proposed templates for a generic national quality assurance framework that were presented in the Statistics Canada report.

6. The feedback received indicated that half of the member countries of the Expert Group responding to the initial set of questions had some type of formal quality assurance framework in place while the other half did not, but all had various quality guidelines or quality control, assessment or management processes of one kind or another in place. The experience and expertise of the Expert Group varied greatly, with many able to share quality tools, good practices and valuable lessons learned. Sustained support, especially from senior management, was considered to be of paramount importance to the successful implementation of a national quality assurance framework. Guidance, especially on the implementation phases of the quality assurance frameworks and tools, will be required by countries. Opinions varied regarding the three proposed generic national quality assurance framework templates that had been presented in the Statistics Canada report, and several members proposed developing a fourth alternative as a combination of the three. The Expert Group agreed to proceed by working on the detailed content of each of the proposed templates.

7. As recommended by the Statistical Commission, the Statistics Division continued working on upgrading its quality assurance website, which will serve as a platform for the exchange of information and experiences on national and international quality assurance work. The Chair and the secretariat invited the Expert Group to provide, on an ongoing basis, new information as it becomes available, as well as additional links and documents on national and international quality work. This information is available from: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/QualityNQAF/nqaf.aspx. Information taken from the Internet concerning other countries and agencies is also available at this website, which will be continually updated and enhanced with the aim of containing a comprehensive inventory of countries' and international organizations' quality work.

IV. Programme of work

8. The Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks will continue to conduct most of its work by means of e-mail exchanges and telephone conferences, at least in the early stages. A physical meeting may be organized at a later stage. The following programme of work is being proposed:

Phase 1: fourth quarter of 2010 and first quarter of 2011

- Identify and review current quality practices, and include additional links/documentation on them in the website inventory
- Review and clarify currently used terminology and reach agreement on development of a common quality glossary
- Work on defining the scope of the national quality assurance frameworks
- Review existing quality mechanisms and tools

Phase 2: second quarter of 2011

- Work on defining a national quality assurance framework template

- Compile/develop guidelines for the implementation of the national quality assurance frameworks and include lessons learned already by others in the implementation stages (continue into phase 3)
- Map existing frameworks to the national quality assurance framework template

Phase 3: third and fourth quarters of 2011

- Compile/develop guidelines for the implementation of the national quality assurance frameworks, including lessons learned already by others in the implementation stages
- Develop training materials to be used in training workshops
- Identify practices that constitute desirable minimum standards
- Draft guidelines with best practices, examples and practical measurable indicators.

9. In conclusion, the Expert Group aims to complete its work by the end of 2011 and will present its recommendations to the Statistical Commission in 2012. In terms of concrete deliverables, the first one, namely the quality website, has already been produced and will be continually updated as additional information becomes available. The timeline for the remaining key deliverables is as follows:

(a) March 2011: agreement on a common quality glossary and on the scope of the national quality assurance frameworks;

(b) July 2011: a generic national quality assurance framework template including mapping to existing frameworks;

(c) December 2011: recommendations on the desirable minimum requirements for implementing the components of the generic national quality assurance framework template, as well as guidelines for the application of the template, building on best practices and real examples drawn from national statistical offices.

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/34

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (n) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: global geospatial information management

Report on global geospatial information management**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.B, decision 41/110), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report on global geospatial information management, which provides an update on recent activities in this field and outlines the findings of the second preparatory meeting on the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, held in New York in May 2010. Furthermore, the present document reports on the mandate of the Economic and Social Council for the work on global geospatial information management and the subsequent preparation of a draft mission statement and terms of reference for the proposed Committee of Experts. The report also describes planned activities for 2011, in particular the first United Nations Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, to be held in Seoul in October 2011.

The Commission is requested to take note of the present report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1

** Upon the recommendation of the experts in this field, the terminology regarding this agenda item was recently changed from "global geographic information management" to "global geospatial information management".

10-68267 (E) 291210

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.B, decision 41/110), the Statistical Commission requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council, outlining a global vision for geographic information management, reviewing the existing mechanisms and exploring the possibility of creating a global forum. In addition, the Commission requested the Statistics Division to convene a meeting of an international expert group, consisting of statisticians and geographical information specialists, to address global geographic information management issues. The Commission also requested the Secretariat to report back to the Commission on the work of the expert group and the preparations for a possible global forum.

II. Global geospatial information management

2. The rapid advances in information and geospatial technologies have made geospatial information an invaluable tool in policy planning. In many sectors of society, it is becoming increasingly recognized that the use of geospatial information would enable more effective responses to global humanitarian, environmental and development issues. Many countries are individually building their national geospatial infrastructure and are recognizing it as critically important for socio-economic development. Nevertheless, effective coordination among countries to use such information is still lacking. There is a general recognition of the need for a country-driven global mechanism that can play a leadership role in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information and promote its use to address key global challenges; liaise and coordinate among Member States, as well as between Member States and international organizations; and ultimately serve as the apex entity of the global geospatial information community.

III. Global geospatial information management activities

3. Over the past year, the Statistics Division has carried out a number of activities aimed at advancing the implementation of resolution 7 of the eighteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, as well as decision 41/110 of the Statistical Commission. These activities included the conduct of a second expert group meeting on global geographic information management, the facilitation of the adoption of an Economic and Social Council decision in this area, the preparation of the mission statement and terms of reference for the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and the development of a website to serve as a hub for the global geospatial information community.

A. Second preparatory meeting of the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

4. The Statistics Division, in cooperation with the United Nations Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support, organized the second preparatory meeting on the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global

Geospatial Information Management from 10 to 11 May 2010 in New York. Experts from 16 countries and 15 regional and international organizations attended the meeting. The discussions focused on the critical issues in geospatial information management and how they could help in addressing the global dimensions of today's emerging challenges, such as poverty, disaster management and climate change. At the meeting, there was a general consensus on the necessity to pursue the discussion of these important issues in a global forum in order to better coordinate the activities of United Nations bodies and other international organizations in this field, exchange practical experiences of geospatial information management among member countries and help countries in need to build their capacities. The announcement of the representative of the Republic of Korea that the first United Nations Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management would be convened in Seoul in 2011 was very much welcome.

B. Economic and Social Council decision

5. In July 2010, the Economic and Social Council decided to request the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its 2011 substantive session a report on global geographic information management (see decision 2010/240). This decision provided the ongoing initiative on global geospatial information management with an official intergovernmental mandate.

C. Mission statement

6. One of the central ideas in the ongoing discussion on global geospatial information management issues is the creation of a platform for continued exchange in the form of a United Nations expert body. The participants of the second preparatory meeting on the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management had therefore deemed it necessary to develop clear terms of reference, including a definition of the mission and objectives of the proposed Committee. Japan, as one of the co-chairs of the second preparatory meeting, was entrusted with leading a drafting committee. The resulting document proposes a global architecture consisting of a two-tiered structure: an expert committee and a global forum. The expert committee would meet more frequently, possibly annually, and be charged with the identification and coordination of specific areas of work and the preparation of policy papers for presentation at the global forum. The global forum would provide a venue for a more general discussion of geospatial information issues and should involve senior national policy decision makers, possibly at the ministerial level. The full text of the document is contained in the annex to the present report. During the discussions on the mission and scope of this global architecture, the experts recommended the use of the term "geospatial" information, instead of "geographic" information, because it is more comprehensive and now more commonly used.

D. Inter-agency mechanism

7. While the global geospatial information management initiative is primarily an intergovernmental mechanism, the proposed Committee of Experts needs the support of an appropriate United Nations inter-agency mechanism. In this regard, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs will be sending a letter to members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and to the United Nations regional commissions, inviting them to give their views on the initiative and bring critical issues of concern to the United Nations family to the attention of Member States for their discussion and decision.

E. Global geospatial information management website

8. In order to support the ongoing debate among Member States, the Statistics Division has developed a website dedicated to the global geospatial information management initiative (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/ggim). The website contains background information on the mandate of global geospatial information management activities and on related events and partners. The mission statement and the terms of reference of the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management are available on this website. Furthermore, the site also provides information and news about major events organized by the Statistics Division and others related to geographic information systems (GIS), cartography and the standardization of geographical names.

IV. Future activities

A. Third preparatory meeting of the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

9. The Statistics Division has initiated the preparatory activities for the organization of the third preparatory meeting on the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, to review and finalize the report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and discuss the future of global geospatial information management activities, including the global forum. The meeting is scheduled to take place in New York from 4 to 6 April 2011.

B. Report of the Economic and Social Council

10. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 2010/240, the Division has initiated the preparation of a report that outlines a global vision for geospatial information management, to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Council at its 2011 substantive session. It is hoped that, on the basis of that report, the Council will provide the formal mandate for future work in this area.

C. Global forum

11. The first United Nations Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management will take place in Seoul from 25 to 28 October 2011. It is meant to be an open forum that will bring together all Member States and interested stakeholders to address current critical issues in the area of geospatial information management and adopt a set of concrete policy proposals and actions for the future.

D. Technical cooperation

12. The Statistics Division is actively seeking funds to enable it to start work with countries that require assistance in their country activities on geospatial information. This will build on the work already done in relation to 2010 population census geocoding activities. The United Nations will work actively with development partners to render the necessary assistance. In this regard, a proposal has been put forward to the Development Account for a modest grant to initiate country-level activities and seek co-financing.

V. Conclusion

13. For the future development of the geospatial information field, one of the key challenges is better integration with statistical information. As the Commission already concluded last year, the swift development of information technology provides considerable opportunities in that context. It is therefore imperative that the professional statistical community, in partnership with relevant national authorities in the geoinformation field, remain fully informed and engaged in the further development of national geospatial information capacities.

14. The Commission is invited to take note of the progress in the work related to the establishment of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and give guidance on the way forward.

Annex

Draft mission statement and terms of reference (as at 28 September 2010) of the proposed United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Global challenges and geospatial information

1. Many of the current problems facing the world, such as climate change, natural disasters, environmental quality, pandemics, wars, famines, population displacement, migration and economic crises, are cross-border challenges of a global nature that require global, regional and national policy responses. It has long been recognized by policymakers that high-quality information and analyses are prerequisites for good policymaking. In this respect, recent advances in technology have seen the emergence of location-based information (geospatial information) as a major contributor to better policy formulation, given its ability to integrate both quantitative and qualitative information across sectors and present this information to decision makers in innovative formats.

2. An increasing amount of geospatial data is being created and captured by using high-resolution satellite imagery and other data collection techniques, and is quickly processed on a variety of levels, from the local to the global, for further analysis and for the expansion of the knowledge base. Such an explosion of rich geospatial information has created a new business domain of location-based services, such as those focused on navigation, and contributed to economic growth, as well as to the competitive development of related technologies. Rapid advances in geospatial information technology are further enabling better access and integration of location-based information, expanding the traditional role of maps to include new tools for information analysis and management. Much of the digital data and information currently available online is location-referenced. This presents both new opportunities and challenges for the effective use of geospatial information to help address problems of major global significance.

3. Geospatial information must be managed and shared in a variety of ways and on a range of levels, from the local to the national to the regional to the global, and this has to be a complementary process. At the local level, most fundamental geospatial data, including land parcels for land administration, buildings and road networks, are developed and maintained by different bodies, often independently and with little coordination among these bodies or with national mapping programmes. At the country level, the role of Government is shifting from being a primary supplier of authoritative geospatial data to being an acquirer of data for national programmes, serving in a coordinating and regulatory role and facilitating partnerships among the producers and consumers of geospatial information. At the regional and global levels, many international initiatives dealing with specialized aspects of geospatial information have been created.

4. Most countries are using geospatial information as an important element in the formation of national policies, but effective coordination among countries in the use of geospatial information is the exception rather than the rule. Regional efforts, like those of the European Union to create the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) initiative and those of the Permanent Committee on Spatial Data Infrastructure of the Americas and the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure

for Asia and the Pacific to create regional spatial data infrastructures, are an indication of the value of such cooperation. Increased international cooperation in this field could help to develop the full potential of geospatial information and the underlying technologies, and make them more useful and accessible to a wide range of users and policymakers.

5. There are both technical and policy challenges involved, such as access to and sharing of data, interoperability, standards, privacy, confidentiality, national security, licensing of data sets, public-private partnerships and the respective roles of public participation, the private sector and Governments in the creation and use of geospatial information management strategies. Consideration of all of these issues would benefit from comparative perspectives on a global scale. Some progress has been made in this respect, such as the work of the Group on Earth Observations to create the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, but much remains to be done. It is suggested that the establishment of a new global mechanism, linking all regional cartographic conferences together and serving as the apex entity of the global geospatial information community, would be one way to move things ahead.

Need for a global consultation mechanism

6. States Members of the United Nations were aware as early as 1948 of the potential benefits of a coordinated programme of international cartography, and they have recognized the importance of maps to global activities;[a] however, the subsequent institutional approach was regional in scope. Under the auspices of the United Nations, regional cartographic conferences were established, which currently cover only two regions — the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas.[b] The United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Africa ceased to meet in the 1990s.[c]

7. Moreover, United Nations activities on the substantive level have thus far focused on cartography and the standardization of geographical names, which are only two of the many specialized fields involved in the inception and implementation of a modern-day geospatial information infrastructure. Since the enactment of Economic and Social Council resolutions 131 (VI) and 476 (XV), technical innovations have transformed the traditional use of maps and allowed the underlying geography to be harnessed for multiple uses. Cartography and geographical names are very important, and the work undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations is well recognized, but the range of geospatial information required to cope with global challenges typically goes far beyond what is, for example, reflected on a map or contained in a gazetteer. Geospatial information infrastructures incorporate varied types of information linked to location, such as demographic, health, environmental, topographic, cadastral and economic information, to name just a few. These data are not only disseminated through the

[a] See Economic and Social Council resolution 131 (VI) of 19 February 1948 on the coordination of cartographic services of specialized agencies and international organizations.

[b] See Economic and Social Council resolution 476 (XV) of 6 April 1953 on international cooperation on cartography and subsequent resolutions.

[c] Spatial data infrastructure development issues in Africa are currently discussed in the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (formerly the Committee on Development Information), which was created by the Economic Commission for Africa.

media, but also provided as information services through the Internet. Therefore, expanding the traditional role of cartography and aligning it with the management of geospatial information and spatial data infrastructure is much needed in order to cater to a largely extended base of users of information at all levels. There is a general recognition that there is a move away from existing classical mapping approaches towards the production of spatial data and information as useful commodities. It should be noted, however, that cartographic visualizations will remain important, or become increasingly so, in order to quickly and intuitively convey the results of analyses of integrated geospatial information to decision makers.

8. While, for example, the Global Observation System of Systems was established as a forum for Member States to discuss earth observations, there is currently no global consultation mechanism through which Member States can come together and discuss the broad spectrum of critical issues with respect to geospatial information management. A growing number of countries are building their spatial data infrastructures and enhancing the management of their geospatial information, so there are considerable benefits to be derived from effective knowledge management at a transnational level. Such benefits have been demonstrated through regional efforts, including the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe initiative, the Permanent Committee on Spatial Data Infrastructure of the Americas and the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific. There is an urgent need, however, for a vehicle that can provide coordination among Member States, and between Member States and international organizations, on work associated with the management of global geospatial information.

9. National Governments and the international community, as represented in United Nations bodies, are the primary users of geospatial information for the purpose of policy decision-making. The Economic and Social Council is the central intergovernmental forum for the discussion of international economic and social issues and the formulation of policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system. The Economic and Social Council is thus the appropriate forum to oversee a consultative process to effectively coordinate ongoing work in the wide field of geospatial information, help develop common approaches and bring geospatial information to bear on global policy issues. The flexible and extensive consultative structure of the Council also allows the effective harnessing of the important contributions of non-State actors, such as international and national non-governmental organizations, the private sector and a growing volunteer community. These partnerships are of growing importance in the development and effective use of geospatial information.

10. Establishing a more formal framework would enable Member States to develop effective strategies for building and strengthening capacity for the management of geospatial information, especially in developing countries. Such a global mechanism, under the auspices of the United Nations, could furthermore raise the awareness of politicians and decision makers of the scope and significance of geospatial information and its powerful analytical potential when effectively integrated with statistical and other information systems, and help address cross-border challenges of a global nature that are facing the world today.

11. A new global architecture could consist of a two-tiered structure: an expert committee and a United Nations forum. The expert committee would meet more

frequently, possibly annually, and be charged with the identification and coordination of specific areas of work and the preparation of policy papers for presentation to the global forum. The forum would provide a venue for a more involved discussion of geospatial information issues and should involve senior national policy decision makers. The two-tier consultation mechanism would bring all Member States and stakeholders together and address current critical issues, resulting in concrete policy proposals and actions.

Functions of the Committee of Experts

12. The basic functions of the Committee of Experts would be:

(a) To play a leadership role in setting the agenda for the management of global geospatial information and to promote its development to address key global challenges, such as poverty reduction, sustainable development, climate change, early warning, disaster management, peace and security, environmental quality and economic crises;

(b) To provide a vehicle for liaison and coordination among Member States, and between Member States and international organizations, including the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conferences and their regional Permanent Committees on Spatial Data Infrastructures, on work associated with the management of global geospatial information and to demonstrate the benefits to be derived from such coordination;

(c) To propose actions to guide the development of principles, policies, methods and mechanisms for the standardization, interoperability and sharing of geospatial data and services, and to help countries develop the full potential of geospatial information and the underlying technology and make it accessible to and effectively used by a broad range of users;

(d) To compile and disseminate best practices of national, regional and international bodies dealing with legal instruments, management models and technical standards for the building of spatial data infrastructures as one of the vital elements of information management, and to facilitate the dissemination of these practices and experiences to Member States of the United Nations;

(e) To provide a platform to develop effective strategies on how to build and strengthen capacity for the management of geospatial information, especially in developing countries;

(f) To support the organization of the United Nations Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, develop its agenda and facilitate its arrangements;

(g) To implement the tasks assigned as a result of the resolutions adopted at the United Nations Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management.

United Nations

E/C.N.3/2011/35

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010
English
Original: French

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 4 (o) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: Measurement of economic performance and social progress

Report of France on the measurement of economic performance and social progress

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (E/2010/24), the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report prepared by the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) (INSEE) in France. The report takes stock of the main initiatives taken by France to put into effect the recommendations of the Commission chaired by Mr. Joseph Stiglitz, with Mr. Amartya Sen as adviser and Mr. Jean-Paul Fitoussi as coordinator, one year after the publication of the report. It describes both the main statistical projects undertaken and the ensuing publications, together with their significance at the international level. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/C.N.3/2011/1

10-68257 (E) 221210 301210

Please recycle

Report of the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques

I. Recommendations of the Stiglitz Commission

A. Mandate of the Commission

1. The Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, known as the Stiglitz Commission, was set up in February 2008 on the initiative of the President of the French Republic. It was mandated to identify the limitations of using gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, to consider what additional information would be needed to give a more accurate picture, to discuss how best to present that information and to check the feasibility of using the measurement tools which it proposed. It submitted its report on 14 September 2009.[1]

B. Main lessons drawn from the report

2. Well-being depends on economic resources such as income, but also on non-economic properties of people's lives: what they do and what they can do, their appreciation of their life, their natural environment. Sustaining well-being at these levels depends on our ability to ensure that capital stocks that matter for our lives (natural, physical, human and social capital) are passed on to future generations. It is therefore important to distinguish between an assessment of current well-being and an assessment of its sustainability, in other words, of its ability to persist over time. To organize its work, the Commission was divided into three working groups, focusing on the traditional issues of measuring gross domestic product (GDP), quality of life, and sustainability, which drew up recommendations in each of these areas.

C. Twelve recommendations for the statistical system

3. Through its 12 recommendations, this landmark report calls for the sustainable reform of the entire domain of official statistics, both in France and at the international level. Following its publication, France put in place a comprehensive work programme. The first work area is concerned with short-term measures, taking information already available and applying it from a new perspective, as set out in section A of chapter II of the present report. The second area is concerned with medium-term measures which require statistical innovations (chapter II, section B) or the revision of surveys to generate new data (chapter II, section C). The third area is concerned with promoting the report and taking the necessary steps to implement it at the international level (chapter III).

[1] Available at the following address: www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr.

II. Implementation of the report's recommendations in France

A. Emphasizing the "household perspective" in national accounts

4. The Commission points out that GDP is a key measure of economic activity but that it is insufficient as a measure of economic well-being. Remaining within the framework of national accounts, it calls on statisticians to give more weight to the household perspective and to household accounting variables that give a better reflection of the production variables, the monetary components of the well-being of households (recommendations 1, 2 and 3).

5. Upon publication of the report, this recommendation was taken up by the Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE) in all its publications on macroeconomic statistics. Alongside statistics reflecting households' disposable income and consumption, increased visibility has been given to their adjusted disposable income and actual consumption, which includes expenses directly covered by the community, such as health-care and education costs.[2] In the publication on France's net wealth position, more prominence has also been given to a description of household wealth.[3]

6. A report published in *L'économie française*[4] illustrates how a simple change of perspective — from a production approach to an income approach — can change international comparisons. In terms of their per capita GDP, the major European countries and Japan are about 25 per cent below the level shown for the United States. Where their adjusted net disposable income is concerned, including income actually received by resident households and household-oriented public spending (education, health, etc.), France ranks higher than Germany, Italy and Japan and is on a par with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

B. Statistical innovations

1. Measuring disparities between households in national accounts

7. Since 2007 INSEE has been engaged in pioneering work, at the global level, to explore discrepancies between the evolving patterns of purchasing power when calculated as an aggregate quantity and when measured at the level of households. This work is entirely consistent with the recommendations of the Stiglitz Commission, which undertakes to make comparisons between the statistical properties of "well-being" and advocates giving more prominence to the distribution of income, consumption and wealth (recommendation 4).

8. The household accounts published in the national accounts have the advantage of setting out as comprehensively as possible the income, consumption and savings

[2] Guillaume Houriez, Vladimir Passeron and others, "Les comptes de la Nation en 2009: une récession sans précédent depuis l'après-guerre", Insee Première (IP) No. 1294, May 2010; Georges Consalès, "En 2009, la consommation des ménages résiste malgré la récession", IP No. 1301, June 2010.

[3] Nathalie Couleaud and Frédéric Delamarre, "Le patrimoine économique national en 2009", IP No. 1305, July 2010.

[4] B. Blanchet, M. Clerc and M. Gaini, "Les préconisations du rapport Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi: quelques illustrations", Insee Références, L'économie française, 2010 edition.

of all households within a harmonized framework that allows international comparisons. By giving the aggregate picture, it sheds light on the situation of an "average" household, but provides no information on the differences between households. INSEE household surveys, carried out at the same time as the publication of the accounts, gather individual information on income and consumption which can be used to measure disparities between individuals. These surveys can also yield consolidated results, however, that deviate from the macroeconomic aggregates. As they are sample surveys that can be affected by the response behaviour of the households surveyed, they contain a measure of uncertainty.

9. The purpose of this exercise is to beef up the macroeconomic statistics with indicators that are more individualized, but still consistent with the overall framework. Accordingly, an effort was made to cross-check the results of five major existing household surveys against national accounts. Using the information provided by the surveys, it was possible to "allocate" the total income and consumption in the national accounts according to different criteria for social and economic well-being. The criteria used were standard of living, make-up of the household, and age and social or professional category of the head of the household.

10. The initial results are particularly interesting.[5] They show, for example, that the French citizens' average savings rate of 17 per cent of disposable income is actually derived from a zero, or even negative, savings rate of 20 per cent for the poorest households, while one fifth of the richest households have a savings rate of almost 35 per cent. Thus, where well-being is concerned, the most affluent households have much more leeway in seeking to improve their quality of life and freedom of choice. The results also shed light on the impact of private transfers between households and, to some extent, between generations. Young people who are poorer and have extensive needs are inevitably in a negative savings situation — but this situation is offset first by generation-to-generation transfers and then by other private transfers.

11. Another significant advance made possible by this empirical approach is that it takes into account transfers in kind associated with free education and public health benefits.[6] The disposable income of one fifth of the poorest households is doubled when these social transfers in kind are factored in, reducing the gap between the incomes of the 20 per cent richest and 20 per cent poorest from a factor of 5 to a factor of 3. This result demonstrates the significant impact which redistribution policies have on the incomes of the poorest.

12. These studies led to initial publications in 2009 and will continue. There are plans to add a social and economic urban-rural dimension in 2011 and to extend the breakdown to the statement of France's net wealth position (recommendation 3) and then, in 2012, to study the evolution over 10 years of the income of the different categories of households. INSEE is also seeking to promote these studies at an international level. A task force on this issue will be set up by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the fourth quarter of 2010. These statistical studies, which look at the household situation and analyse

[5] Maryse Fesseau, Vanessa Bellamy and Emilie Raynaud, "Les inégalités entre ménages dans les comptes nationaux", IP No. 1265, November 2009.

[6] Sylvie Le Laidier, "Les transferts en nature atténuent les inégalités de revenu", IP No. 1264, November 2009.

household consumption, savings and wealth in the overall framework of national accounts, while also taking into account free public transfers, are in line with the Commission's recommendations.

2. Producing indicators for the objective measurement of quality of life

13. One of the Commission's main recommendations on the measurement of well-being was the need to develop indicators of quality of life in all its dimensions, which could also yield comprehensive and holistic evaluations of disparities (recommendations 6, 7 and 8).

14. INSEE has developed objective measures of quality of life that go beyond purely material or monetary considerations.[7] They also take into account working conditions, social inclusion,[8] health and education, and insecurity, both physical and economic (such as unemployment), to produce a holistic view of the disparities. Most of these dimensions reflect recommendations of the Stiglitz Commission. This work is based on data drawn from several existing surveys, such as the statistics on income and living conditions (SILC) or the livelihood and safety survey. It should be possible to extend the analysis further in the light of future surveys.

15. Each dimension of quality of life is modelled from a list of basic binary indicators. A person does not reach a given standard of living in any one dimension if he or she is confronted by a number of problems (each measured by a basic indicator) at a level above an arbitrarily determined threshold. The various indicators are calculated at the individual level, thereby producing quality of life indicators for all possible social groups. The aggregate indicator for a given dimension is defined as the proportion of people below the threshold for that dimension. A radar chart is then used to show, in graphic outline, the position of a group of people relative to the general population.

16. These studies[9] show, for example, that 25 per cent of those with the lowest standard of living have a greater risk of encountering difficulties in each quality of life dimension. Their physical living conditions are harder than those of the general population, and they have worse health and a lower level of education. On average, they also have more difficult working conditions, lower levels of economic and physical security, less contact with other people and are more cut off from public life. Similarly, it appears that age-related effects differ depending on the dimensions considered. Younger people are better off in the dimensions of health, education and social contact, while the elderly are often less financially constrained and more involved in public life. The studies also show[10] that approaches to poverty in "monetary" terms and in terms of "living conditions" do not coincide exactly, as living conditions do not adjust immediately — or even systematically — to income.

17. Housing conditions have important social implications, including for children's education. The Commission recommends that particular attention be paid to this issue. In 2010, INSEE published a study on the disparities between

[7] INSEE, *Objective Indicator of Quality of Life*, report prepared for the ninety-sixth conference of the Directors-General of National Statistical Institutes (DGINS), Sofia, September 2010; INSEE, "Une mesure de la qualite de vie", France, portrait social, 2010 edition.

[8] INSEE, "Qu'est-ce que le capital social?", France, portrait social, 2010 edition.

[9] INSEE, "Une mesure de la qualite de vie".

[10] "La pauvrete en conditions de vie a touche plus d'une personne sur cinq entre 2004 et 2007", Seminaire inegalites, 26 November 2010.

households in terms of housing costs[11] and another on marginal housing conditions (also to be published in late 2010).

3. Calculating the carbon footprint attributable to national demand

18. An important recommendation in the report is the need to distinguish between the assessment of current well-being and the assessment of its sustainability, i.e., the likelihood that it will persist over time. The Commission believes that it is not realistic to try and identify a single indicator for sustainability. It proposes using a single monetary indicator which focuses on the non-environmental dimensions of wealth, with a few well-chosen physical indicators to describe the status and trends of the environment. In line with the recommendations, the 15 sustainable development indicators[12] which were selected for monitoring the national sustainable development strategy include a range of physical indicators for the environmental aspects (recommendations 11 and 12).

19. A limited number of level 1 indicators are highlighted. GDP is used as an indicator of the economic and social circumstances, alongside the net national income per capita. The social dimension is more effectively taken into account with the use of indicators relating to the integration of young people in the labour market or early school-leaving.

20. Where climate change is concerned, the selected indicator is the carbon footprint attributable to final domestic demand.[13] This indicator — which the Stiglitz report favours over the ecological footprint[14] — is particularly innovative and needs to be further developed. It measures the carbon dioxide emissions generated — not by companies' production activities in a country's territory — but by the making of the products consumed by households, regardless of where they are made. In a globalized economy, this is a key indicator for assessing the overall impact of a country's consumption on the climate, which is a global public good. Attributing emissions from domestic production to final demand entails combining the input-output table (IOT) of the national accounts with the environmental accounts (in physical quantities), broken down by economic activity (following the "national accounting matrix including environmental accounts" — or NAMEA — system). Under these conditions, once all foreign trade has been taken into account, the carbon footprint of each French citizen's final demand measures 9 tons per year, while production on French soil is responsible for the emission, on average, of 6.7 tons per person.

21. These analyses go beyond the calculation of average CO_2 emissions per household. In line with the report's recommendations, they are also concerned with the diversity of the emissions, as a function of households' individual circumstances. Results showing this can be obtained by combining data on the consumption pattern of households by household type (see section A.1) with data on CO_2 emissions by major consumption area. These show[15] that the 20 per cent richest

[11] INSEE, "Les inégalités des ménages face au coût du logement", 2010 edition.

[12] INSEE, *Repères. Les indicateurs de la stratégie nationale de développement durable*, 2010 edition.

[13] Ibid.

[14] INSEE, "Une expertise de l'empreinte écologique", Etude et document n°16, January 2010.

[15] F. Lenglart, C. Lesieur and J.-L. Pasquier, "Les émissions de CO_2 du circuit économique", *Insee Référence*, L'économie française, 2010 edition.

households emit two and a half times more CO_2 than the 20 per cent poorest households. Owing, however, to structural difference in consumer baskets, the CO_2 content per euro spent is on average lower for well-to-do households than for those that are less well off.

22. There are plans to take the method used in calculating the carbon footprint and to use it to estimate France's water footprint in early 2011 and then to the footprint of other pollutants.

C. Producing new data

1. Clearer identification of the disparities

23. In response to the Commission's recommendation that more prominence should be given to analysing the distribution of income, consumption and wealth (recommendation 4), in 2010 several publications focused on an analysis of income disparities based on existing surveys, such as those on income tax and social security[16] or tax data.[17] One involved an analysis of very high incomes, another trends in the standard of living. They showed that, between 1996 and 2007, the level of the poorest households and that of the most affluent tended to rise faster than those of the categories in between. This result has the effect of matching the statistics with the sensation of increasing poverty experienced by the middle classes.

24. In order to extend the analysis of high incomes still further and to disaggregate the indicators of living standard disparities at the local levels — the department, commune and district levels — there are plans to step up observation arrangements in 2013 and at the same time to create a file for each household residing in France containing details of their tax credits and benefit payments.

25. Household assets represent an even more important source of inequality between households than income and the Commission is particularly attentive to this issue. Accordingly, in the 2009-2010 household assets survey there was a deliberate oversampling of wealthy households and questions were put on matters such as professional assets and intangible assets, in order to gain as much information as possible about "social capital" — in other words, everything to do with relationships (family relations, community life, participation in social discussions) or symbols of wealth (possession of works of art or luxury goods). The initial findings on wealth disparities and asset ownership levels will be published before the end of 2010.

26. Lastly, the tracking of unsatisfactory housing conditions, an important factor underlying inequality and poor quality of life, will be improved. The aim is to produce regular overviews of marginal housing conditions. A new survey of the homeless will be conducted in early 2012 and the protocols for censuses of the homeless population will be brought into line with this survey. Compared to its predecessors, the housing survey to be conducted in 2012 will contain far more questions on homelessness and the provision of shelter by third parties, and will also include a new section on the heating efficiency of residential housing. It will shed more light on the issues both of quality of life and of sustainable consumption.

---

[16] Jérôme Pujol and Magda Tomasini, "Les inégalités de niveaux de vie entre 1996 et 2007", IP No. 1266, November 2009.

[17] J. Solard, "Les très hauts revenus: des différences de plus en plus marquées entre 2004 et 2007", *Insee référence, Les revenus du patrimoine des ménages*, 2010 edition.

2. Measuring subjective well-being

27. The Stiglitz Commission recommends that both objective quality of life and subjective well-being should be measured. To look more closely into these areas, several existing INSEE surveys have been expanded, including the SILC survey and the survey on households' time use.

28. In the first survey, since 2010 respondents have been asked about their subjective assessment of their lives in general and of some of its specific aspects (leisure, family relations, housing, work and health). Some of the households surveyed in 2010 will be sent an additional questionnaire, to gain a deeper understanding of the determinants of well-being. In the 2009-2010 time-use survey, the households surveyed are given a journal in which, over a period of 24 hours (48 hours at weekends), they record their activity every 10 minutes. In the survey, 1,000 households were asked to rate the quality of the time spent on each of their activities during the day. The initial results of these surveys should be available later in 2011 and will be published.

29. The results of the time-use survey will also be issued in 2011. They will provide elements that can be taken into account in addition to GDP when considering the domestic activities of households and will expand the range of income measures to non-market activities (see recommendation 5). Publication is planned for 2012.

III. France's involvement in international developments

30. In addition to producing national statistics, INSEE also plays a lead role at the international level with OECD and the European Union in publicizing and ensuring the implementation of the report's recommendations.

A. European sponsorship

31. The most progress has been made at the European level. INSEE and Eurostat are leading a sponsorship group in which 15 member States of the European Union have put forward proposals on ways of implementing the report's recommendations. A progress report was presented to the directors of national institutes of statistics at their meeting in September 2010 and the final report is due to be issued in July 2011. The sponsorship group is operating in a difficult environment, setting ambitious statistical goals in a context of fiscal restraint. The priorities may differ from country to country: some consider, for example, that the measurement of subjective well-being is still at the research stage.

32. For practical reasons, the sponsorship group is organized into four task forces. The first deals with issues related to the household perspective and the disparity in incomes, consumption and wealth; the second with issues of sustainability; the third with the multidimensional aspects of quality of life. Finally, the fourth task force is concerned with the conceptual framework and cross-cutting issues.

33. More specifically, the first task force is looking at which national accounts data should be highlighted in order to measure the well-being of households more accurately: household income, with or without in-kind services provided cost-free

by the Government, final consumption, or actual consumption. Based on the experience of France, it is considering which household surveys are required in order to disaggregate the household accounts by household category and to provide data on income distribution and consumption. It is also looking at the role to be accorded to household balance sheets in the programmes for the exchange of European statistics (European System of Accounts — ESA) and the need to broaden the income measures to non-market activities such as leisure and domestic work. The task force on sustainability is concerned with such issues as the integration of environmental accounts in national accounts, the link between national accounts and energy accounts, and a review of the dashboard indicators of sustainable development, with a view to strengthening its environmental component. The task force on quality of life is responsible for proposing objective indicators of quality of life based on the household surveys and relevant administrative data and combining the different dimensions. It is also required to assess disparities in living conditions and measure subjective well-being.

B. OECD

34. INSEE is also cooperating with OECD, which, outside the boundaries of Europe, is working on the application of the report to the countries of North America, and also to Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and other countries. On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, OECD will bring out a publication on measuring progress and well-being, which will collate the data issued on this topic. It also plans to take a more detailed look at environmental accounting and the measuring of human capital stocks and intangible assets and to develop short-term indicators of living conditions from the standpoint of economic resources. An international task force led by OECD will be established in late 2010 to break down household accounts by category, building on work already done in France, and to draw up a conceptual framework linking the income, expenditure and wealth of individual households. All this will require strong leadership and coordination, in order, among other things, to harness synergies with the European sponsorship programme.

35. Lastly, in general terms, INSEE is going to considerable lengths to respond to international requests to publicize the report and the work that has already been performed. Once the report was published, INSEE drew up a communication plan to disseminate the Commission's recommendations and the progress made by the French official statistical system in implementing those recommendations. The INSEE website has a special page on issues, summarizing the work already accomplished and setting out the future agenda.[18]

36. Other countries are interested in these initiatives, including Brazil, which has invited Eurostat and INSEE to present the work of the sponsorship programme at the final meeting of the European Union-Mercosur statistical cooperation project. OECD is developing an Internet platform (Wikiprogress) for all partners and stakeholders involved in the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies.

[18] www.insee.fr/fr/publications-et-services/default.asp?page=dossiers_web/stiglitz/performance_eco.htm

Annex

Recommendations from the Stiglitz report

Recommendation 1: As part of the evaluation of material well-being, look at income and consumption rather than production.

Recommendation 2: Emphasize the household perspective.

Recommendation 3: Consider income and consumption jointly with wealth.

Recommendation 4: Give more prominence to the distribution of income, consumption and wealth.

Recommendation 5: Broaden income measures to non-market activities.

Recommendation 6: Quality of life depends on people's objective conditions and capabilities. Steps should be taken to improve measures of people's health, education, personal activities and environmental conditions. In particular, substantial effort should be devoted to developing and implementing robust, reliable measures of social connections, political voice, and insecurity that can be shown to predict life satisfaction.

Recommendation 7: Quality-of-life indicators in all the dimensions covered should assess inequalities in a comprehensive way.

Recommendation 8: Surveys should be designed to assess the links between various quality-of-life domains for each person, and this information should be used when designing policies in various fields.

Recommendation 9: Statistical offices should provide the information needed to aggregate across quality-of-life dimensions, allowing the construction of different indexes.

Recommendation 10: Measures of both objective and subjective well-being provide key information about people's quality of life. Statistical offices should incorporate questions to capture people's life evaluations, hedonic experiences and priorities in their own survey.

Recommendation 11: Sustainability assessment requires a well-identified dashboard of indicators. The distinctive feature of the components of this dashboard should be that they are interpretable as variations of some underlying "stocks". A monetary index of sustainability has its place in such a dashboard but, under the current state of the art, it should remain essentially focused on economic aspects of sustainability.

Recommendation 12: The environmental aspects of sustainability deserve a separate follow-up based on a well-chosen set of physical indicators. In particular there is a need for a clear indicator of our proximity to dangerous levels of environmental damage (such as associated with climate change or the depletion of fishing stocks).

United Nations E/CN.3/2011/36

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-second session
22-25 February 2011
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Provisional agenda and dates for the forty-third session of the Commission

Draft multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission, 2011-2014

Note by the Secretariat

In accordance with a request contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/51 of 29 July 1999, a proposed multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission is set out below. Reflecting comments from members and observers of the Commission and a review of its workplans by the United Nations Statistics Division, it constitutes a revision of the multi-year programme of work for 2010-2013 (E/CN.3/2010/33) considered by the Commission at its forty-first session.

* E/CN.3/2011/1

10-68204 (E) 211210

Please recycle

Proposed multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission, 2011-2014

Activity	2011	2012	2013	2014
1. Demographic and social statistics				
(a) Population and housing censuses	X	X	X	X
(b) Human settlements statistics			X	
(c) Health statistics	X		X	
(d) Social statistics		X		X
(e) Poverty statistics			X	
(f) Education statistics	X		X	
(g) Statistics of drugs and drug use		X		
(h) Statistics on crime		X		
(i) Washington Group on Disability Measurement (city group)		X		X
(j) Migration statistics		X		X
(k) Employment statistics		X		
(l) Gender statistics	X		X	
(m) Culture statistics			X	
2. Economic statistics				
(a) National accounts	X	X	X	X
(b) Agricultural statistics	X	X		X
(c) Wye Group on Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income (city group)		X		X
(d) Industrial statistics		X		
(e) Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers	X		X	
(f) Energy statistics	X		X	
(g) Oslo Group on Energy Statistics (city group)	X		X	
(h) Distributive trade statistics		X		X
(i) International merchandise trade statistics		X		X
(j) Statistics of international trade in services		X		X
(k) Statistics of services		X		X
(l) Voorburg Group on Service Statistics (city group)		X		X
(m) Information and communication technologies statistics		X		
(n) Tourism statistics	X		X	
(o) Finance statistics		X		
(p) International Comparison Programme	X	X	X	X
(q) Ottawa Group on Price Indexes (city group)		X		X
(r) Price Statistics	X		X	
(s) Statistics of science and technology			X	
(t) Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics (city group)			X	
(u) Integrated economic statistics	X		X	
(v) Short-term economic indicators	X			

Agenda item	2007	2008	2009	2010
3. Natural resources and environment statistics				
(a) Environment statistics	X		X	
(b) Environmental-economic accounting	X	X	X	X
(c) London Group on Environmental Accounting (city group)		X		X
(d) Climate change statistics				X
4. Activities not classified by field				
(a) Coordination and integration of statistical programmes	X	X	X	X
(b) Programme questions (United Nations Statistics Division)	X	X	X	X
(c) Statistics of human development	X		X	
(d) Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics	X		X	
(e) International economic and social classifications		X		X
(f) Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata	X		X	
(g) Presentation of statistical data and metadata			X	
(h) Statistical capacity-building	X	X	X	X
(i) Dissemination of statistics by the United Nations Statistics Division			X	
(j) Development indicators	X	X	X	X
(k) Follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions	X	X	X	X
(l) Working methods of the Statistical Commission			X	
(m) Principles governing international statistical activities		X		
(n) Regional statistical development	X	X	X	X
(o) National quality assurance framework	X		X	
(p) Global Geospatial Information Management	X	X		X
(q) Inventory on Global Statistical Standards	X			
(r) World Statistics Day	X			
(s) Measurement of economic performance and social progress	X			
Total number of items	**30**	**31**	**32**	**28**

Programme reviews

2003: Statistics of services	2008: Employment statistics
2004: Social statistics	2009: Climate change and official statistics
2005: Energy statistics	2010: National quality assurance framework
2006: Industrial statistics	2011: Gender statistics
2007: Education statistics	2012: (proposed) Population and Housing Censuses